

Running head: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Perceptions of Early Head Start Teachers of Instructional Coaching

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY HEAD START TEACHERS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

A THESIS
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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Abstract

Recent Early Head Start standards require instructional coaching be utilized as a form of teacher development. (Head Start: Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2018). This research provides an insight into Early Head Start teachers' experiences and perceptions of instructional coaching. Instructional coaching has been utilized in educational settings to enhance teaching practices and to increase professional development (Knight, 2009). Thus far, most of the research has focused on coaching in K-12 programs (Gentry, Manning, Wolf, Hernez-Broome, & Allen, 2013). This study builds upon this body of research by developing an understanding of the teacher's perceptions from those in an early head start setting. The overarching question of this study is: How do Early Head Start teachers perceive instructional coaching methods? Instructional coaching encompasses various learning theories that define effective professional development strategies. Within each theory, specific coaching insight is highlighted and expanded on to showcase the different strengths each philosophy embodies. The three categories discussed include Transformative Learning Theory, Facilitation Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Seven Early Head Start teachers volunteered to participate in individual semi structured interviews. Data was analyzed using open coding and thematic analysis. The findings revealed four themes: (a) coaching provides support, (b) coaching supports feedback, (c) relationships support change, (d) consistency provides stability. Within each theme, participants identified benefits, challenges, and their personal experiences. Findings from this study will contribute to refining instructional coaching practices, support, and how to enhance overall teaching practices for infant/toddler teachers. This study could help further research practice for early childhood programs serving infants and toddlers and provide insights of high quality practices through instructional coaching.

Keywords: Instructional, Coaching, Teachers, Perceptions, Qualitative, Infants, Toddlers

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful family and friends. There are not enough ways to express my appreciation and gratitude that I owe every one of you. Thank you all for the grace, patience, support, and most of all the never-ending encouragement you have given me throughout this endeavor. Without your support and commitment, this journey would have not been possible. Thank you for challenging and pushing me beyond my limits, as it has made me a stronger person and a professional. When I began my journey several years ago, I never imagined in my wildest dreams I would be standing here where I am today. For everyone that stuck by my side and walked with me on my path of success, I am forever indebted to each of you. I am honored to have had you with me every step of the way. This is for you!

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Instructional coaching practices have become one of the most common forms of professional development in early childhood programs. Instructional coaching is often defined as “A process of challenging and supporting a person or a team to develop ways of being and ways of learning” (Berg & Karlsen, 2007, p. 4). The Office of Head Start (OHS) has implemented a federally funded coaching protocol to support teachers in both Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs. With instructional coaches in place, they provide ongoing professional development within their teachers’ classrooms (Lloyd & Modlin, 2012). Still, there is a need for further research on the perspectives of teachers within EHS, as instructors in infant and toddler classrooms often lack the data on proper caregiving practices.

Instructional Coaching in Early Head Start Programs

In the realm of instructional coaching, the Practice-Based Coaching model (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018) is widely used among Head Start and Early Head Start facilities. As federal program grantees implement coaching practices in their programs, federal dollars are dedicated to supporting such efforts. However, more research is necessary to determine the degree of success coaching practices have on altering teaching styles and behaviors within the classroom (Knight, 2011). Instructional coaching is an essential tool for professional development among early childhood educators. Coaching practices provide concepts to teachers that provoke thought and active listening, and in turn, promote growth in teaching techniques. Teachers who receive instructional coaching change their teaching practices and strengthen their skills. Overall, coaching encourages positive development within teachers and their teams, as well as the children they serve (Devine, Meyers, & Houssemand, 2013). Still unknown is the impact of coaching on the pedagogy of teachers of infants and toddlers.

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Statement of the Problem

Among early childhood practitioners, professional development is critical. Instructional coaching is an optimal method of training as it provides support and immediate feedback for teachers to assist in the implementation of high-quality teaching practices. The primary objective of instructional coaching is to help build confidence and competence among teachers, as well as supporting and refining teaching skills (Knight, 2007).

However, many professionals such as teachers, resist the notion of accepting meaningful and useful feedback from their instructional coach (Britton & Anderson, 2010). Professional development can be achieved through instructional coaching. With regular support, coaching strategies provide teachers with reflective practices and enhancement of their skills (Knight, 2009a). For teachers to be fully supported and genuinely effective within their classrooms, leadership must be willing to provide the necessary provisions for a teacher to receive focused coaching.

Instructional coaching implemented as an active professional development method provides teachers with a means of applying new knowledge that the training has provided (Knight, 2007). Studies have shown that teachers who attend training or seminars only implement five percent of what they learned (Gulamhussein, 2013). Teachers who receive regular instructional coaching have shown a 95% performance and knowledge increase (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018). Teachers who are receptive to instructional coaching are more effective in refining their skill set and therefore they improve their teaching practices (Knight, 2007). The essential principle of instructional coaching is to develop skills with teaching staff, so that they improve the outcomes of their teaching for the

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students (Devine et al., 2013.). Ongoing research from leadership is essential as it is a way of improving teachers and refining a culture of best practices within the school.

However, there is insufficient research on instructional coaching in EHS. The overarching question is: How do Early Head Start teachers perceive instructional coaching methods? To better understand instructional coaching in infant and toddler classrooms, teachers' opinions and insights were gathered to understand and improve overall coaching practices.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' viewpoints on instructional coaching. This research also attempted to understand the experiences of teachers who have worked with instructional coaches by using in-depth interviews. Qualitative methods within this study were utilized to engage newer teachers as well as those who are seasoned in the educational profession. Furthermore, this analysis also details the teaching setting that influences teachers' interpretations of instructional coaching.

Within instructional coaching, the EHS classrooms follow a sub-coaching model, Practice-Based Coaching. Although evidence-based methods are utilized, becoming accustomed to an ongoing coaching environment may feel overwhelming, because the coaching process tends to involve an elaborate mentor relationship between the coach and teacher (Knight, 2011). Using in-depth interviews with individual teachers, an extensive evaluation of the perceptions of instructional coaching, provided a better understanding of teaching challenges in infant and toddler classrooms.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study provided answers to the following questions: What perceptions do infant and toddler teachers have regarding instructional coaching methods? How do EHS

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teachers describe the influence of coaching on their teaching practices? Which portions of instructional coaching do teachers find valuable and invaluable? What factors influenced the way teachers view instructional coaching?

Theoretical Framework

Professional development within the early childhood context involves a variety of topics and disciplines. Instructional coaching is one area of development that utilizes intentional interactions within natural classroom surroundings (Fazel, 2013). This practice ensures that both the coach and teacher are in a conducive learning environment. Child caregivers such as Early Head Start (EHS) teachers, are often confined to their classrooms for the majority of the day with eight to twelve children. ‘Outside’ adult interaction is minimal, which makes instructional coaching an opportunity to decrease teacher isolation and to offer professional development to strengthen the teacher's skill set. Coaching sessions offer practice, observation of interactions, intentional and meaningful dialogue, and learning relationships (Knight, 2011). Furthermore, professional development gives a teacher an opportunity to build an active community of teaching professionals (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Instructional coaching encompasses various learning theories that define effective professional development strategies. Within each method, specific coaching insight is highlighted and expanded on to showcase the different strengths each philosophy embodies. The three categories that were discussed included: Transformative Learning Theory, Facilitation Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). These will be discussed in further detail in the literature review section.

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Significance of Study

Implementing an effective instructional coaching method requires that leadership explores the various reasons teachers resist coaching support. Consistently providing an instructional coaching presence could have positive effects on teachers, children, and the program. The discoveries in this study provided teachers with valuable insights into the benefits and implications of instructional coaching.

This study also provides instructional coaches with insights on how to improve and refine their practices. Information collected serves as a vehicle to enhance professional development. Leaders equipped with knowledge about coaching practices can make effective program decisions regarding the content of professional development so that teachers are better equipped to use high-quality teaching practices.

Methodology

This study employed in-depth interviews, thematic analysis, and purposeful sampling to document the perceptions of Early Head Start teachers and their understanding of instructional coaching. In-depth interviewing provided an outlet for teachers to describe their teaching practices along with coaching intervention, as well as their direct perception of the coaching experience.

Terminology

Instructional Coaching. A specialist that uses a content-based approach which has been shown to be effective in supporting teachers' professional development and higher student outcomes (Devine, Meyers, Houssemand, 2013, p. 1384).

Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) Model. PBC is a cyclical process for supporting teachers' use of reflective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children. The three-cycle model components include: 1.) Planning goals and action steps, 2.) Engaging in focused observation

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and 3.) Reflecting on and sharing feedback about teaching practices (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018).

Professional development. Training that incorporates structured activities that professionals partake in to acquire new skill sets and information improve their teaching methods (Killion & Harrison, 2006).

Early Head Start Teachers. Early childhood teachers that primarily teach children ages birth to age three (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2017).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). An approach grounded in teaching and research on the appropriate development and learning of young children and what is known about successful early learning. DAP is a framework that is intended to endorse young children's ideal method of acquiring knowledge (Copple & Bredekamp, 2008).

Evidence-Based Practices. An informed decision-making method that assimilates the best available research with families and professional insight and standards (Buysse, Wesley, Patricia, Synder, & Winton, 2006).

Summary

Chapter one gave a brief synopsis of the importance of instructional coaching among early childhood teachers, and the different forms of coaching that are provided for optimal outcomes. Additionally, expectations of teachers were demonstrated, along with a summary of the necessity for intentionally based professional development training. The responsibilities of an educator have evolved in the past decade and it is vital that administrators offer teachers sufficient opportunities to participate in professional development. The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' viewpoints on instructional coaching, and understand their experiences with coaching practices.

Chapter two includes a literature review discussing the research on instructional coaching in teaching settings. Facilitation, Transformative, and Experiential learning theories were also discussed to gain further understanding of adult learning theories relate to instructional coaching.

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Lastly, the chapter includes a segment about Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), current research on instructional coaching models (e.g., Practice-Based Coaching), and how coaching directly influences early learning development and teacher knowledge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“We see a coach as a thinking partner for teachers, and coaching as a meeting of minds”

(Knight, 2011, p. 21)

This chapter aims to provide a review of current research on instructional coaching methods of teachers in an early childhood learning environment, discusses the different modes of adult learning styles (transformational, facilitation, and experiential), and concludes with an examination of varying teaching perspectives on instructional coaching practices. This review further examines professional development, enhancing the Early Head Start training, and how teacher insight influences their learning. Lastly, there is a review of pertinent research on coaching practices, and the impact that coaching has on both teacher abilities and student outcomes.

In the Beginning: An Early Head Start and Head Start Historical Perspective

Head Start is known as the premier federally sponsored early childhood program. The Head Start initiative was implemented and signed into law in 1965 by Lyndon B. Johnson (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2017). President Johnson actively promoted the idea of having a Head Start program for children who lived in households that were substantially below the poverty line to lessen the disparities in school readiness (Bierman et al., 2008). Studies suggest that high-quality preschool programs can improve school readiness and have extended benefits over time (Bierman et al., 2008).

The Head Start program primarily addresses the importance of school readiness and having high-quality classrooms. Studies have shown that early childhood classrooms and a suitable family environment directly influence young children’s development and learning style (Wen, Leow, Hahs-Vaughn, Korfmacher, & Marcus, 2012). Although there are various facets of early childhood learning, school readiness focuses on specific features of a high-quality

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classroom. Wen et al. (2012) suggests that promoting early language modeling, literacy, and mathematics skills at an early age will enhance critical development during preschool years. High-quality classrooms that embody optimal standards (e.g., teacher sensitivity, positive climate, language development, pro-social behavior, and emotional development) provide children with skill sets for later life (Wen et al., 2012). However, not every Head Start program produces high-quality teaching, thus irregular results or outcomes are frequent. Reasoning behind this theory results from a weakness in curriculum implementation, lack of parent-focused home visits, and appropriate teacher training and organizational support (Bierman et al., 2008). These features of the program are significant because each child benefits and thrives from the developmentally appropriate teaching styles provided (Copple & Bredekamp, 2008).

After nearly thirty years of Head Start implementation, the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) elected to design an infant and toddler program in 1995. Early Head Start was created to improve the lives of young children's development, introduce families with community support services, increased professional development, help disadvantaged families in poverty, and to reach young pregnant mothers with young children (Love et al., 2002). The ACYF piloted the first 143 programs from 1995-1996, providing professional development training and technical assistance (T&TA). These programs train teachers and staff and provide program monitoring. As of 2002, over 55,000 children and 664 communities were impacted at the earliest stages of a child's life (Love et al., 2002). The ACYF chose 17 specific Early Head Start sites among rural and diverse populations across the nation to take part in an intense and thorough evaluation to assess the overall program. The assessment measured areas of improvement and areas of strength with a balanced representation to gather national data (Love et al., 2002). Currently, the Administration of Children, Youth, and Families (2017) reported

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over one million children are served throughout every state and within 1,700 communities, meeting the needs of highly diverse at-risk families; a 1,818 % increase within twenty-two years of continuous implementation.

Instructional Coaching Methods and Models

The Administration on Children, Youth, & Families (2018) defines Practice-Based Coaching as a reoccurring method of support for teaching staff and provides guidance on effective teaching practices that promote positive results in children's development and learning. As a newer coaching model, Practice-Based Coaching supports professional development among adult learners and increases classroom effectiveness (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018). Professional development opportunities and teacher related trainings should be carefully considered as it directly impacts and influences the way teachers implement teaching practices within their classrooms (Knowles, 1973; Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The Practice-Based Coaching model encourages teachers and instructional coaches to develop a collaborative partnership to allow for joint efforts in developing teaching practices and enhancing teacher's professional development (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018). This relationship consists of working contacts between the instructional coach and teacher, providing a safe place to discuss instructional questions, and a way to reflect on teaching practices. The utilization and implementation of coaching develops better-skilled teachers and instructional coaches as practices are sustained and refined over time (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018). The foundation to an effective partnership is one that encompasses elements based on relationships, support, constructive feedback, and consistency. The manner in which a teacher is coached will ultimately affect their immediate work environment, professional dedication, and their buy-in to the coaching model (Knight, 2011). Various studies have been

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conducted, showing credibility to instructional coaching, as it is a powerful tool in how teachers are influenced (Heineke, 2013). Instructional coaching is a method that is neither punitive nor opinionated. Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1980) pioneered 'instructional coaching' as a credible resource as a form of professional development. Joyce and Showers (1980) noted that coaching has a dual purpose: improving learning from worthy trainings and cultivating classroom teaching practices.

The activities for an adult learner are aligned with identifying attributes such as their age, how they perceive themselves, and their societal roles (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Learning endeavors evolve throughout a human's lifespan (Mezirow, 2000). Adults and children vary based on how learning is experienced. Unlike adults, children have yet to obtain rational experiences, standards, and expectations that make up their learning environment (Mezirow, 2000).

Instructional coaching provides a powerful relationship that is used to assist professionals in making meaningful changes in their lives and their profession (Fazel, 2013). Coaching can occur in various ways (e.g., one-on-one, teaching teams) that are focused oriented with specific action steps and goals. Maintaining an active coaching relationship with the teacher(s) translates action into transformative learning (Fazel, 2013). Providing a stable and consistent coaching ethic with teachers will improve teaching output overall. When instructional coaching is offered as another professional development avenue, teachers view this practice as beneficial (Knight, 2011). If instructional coaching is utilized as a tool, effective teacher practices are supported and sustained (Teemant, Leland, & Berghoff, 2014). Alongside Practice-Based Coaching, instructional coaching incorporates all three adult learning styles: transformative, facilitation, & experiential learning.

Theoretical Framework

Transformative Learning Theory

In the realm of early childhood teaching, teachers are at the center of adult learning. According to Fazel (2013), transformative learning theory applies perplexing learning predicaments to provoke more in-depth critical thinking skills. Adult learners are supported in ways that elicit reflection. Learners are expected to question their assumptions and principles of their surrounding environments and determine if their thinking is accurate. Throughout this process, 'Perspective transformation' (Fazel, 2013) is the high point of the learning theory, along with three elements of learning: social (modifying ones' lifestyle), mental (interpreting ones' self), and beliefs (amending ones' followed principles). Jack Mezirow authored the transformative learning theory in the later part of the twentieth century (Fazel, 2013). Mezirow (1991) describes this learning theory as an avenue for people to develop and utilize self-reflection to contemplate one's' principles and encounters and, with time, alter ambiguous viewpoints of their environments. The perception of a person's' worldview and the process of changing one's' viewpoint was Mezirow's primary interest. Mezirow (1991) specified that learners need to prepare by identifying 'frames of reference' and to utilize their creative thoughts to assist in restructuring difficulties from another standpoint (Fazel, 2013).

Transformative learning coaching practices provide adult learners with a 'hands-on' learning approach to execute skills that are learned throughout training. Feedback provided informs the learner about their current progress and measured productivity, based on their actions (Knight, 2011). Reinforcing positive practices from all resources given improves a learner's skill in applying what they have learned (Olivero, Bane, & Kopleman, 1997).

Transformational learning has been a primary source of power for humans to change their worldviews and experiences. People undergo a thought process that perpetuates the expectation

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that humans can be much more than anticipated. Cranton (1996) and Mezirow (1991) proposed that humans create their version or meaning to assist with creating a construct of understanding of how to be in one's environment.

Robert Kegan (1994) sought out a paradigm shift of transformational learning and extended the model by insisting that education is a superior extension, constructing or generating a more significant, more profound, and more meaningful collection of the knowledge one already possesses, versus improving the association with the knowledge base, both objective and subjective. Kegan (1994) states that, for transformational learning to occur, the person must change. This change should surpass one's behavior, feelings, and understanding. It means recreating oneself beyond internal development (spiritual, heart, the mind) by recreating the way one learns through the world, thus strengthening internal and external strength (Poutiatine & Conners, 2012).

Restructuring the internal reflective fixture may be examined and reassessed to ensure that one's thought process can be more rich and meaningful in the work that precedes them. Robert Kegan (2000) acknowledged that the level of adult competence is of unique value as we become significantly more self-reflective. King and Kitchener (1994) build on this concept by adding that reflective judgment is also an added component because it supports one's assumptions and expectations revolving around their own beliefs, values, and feelings. To be able to understand the complexity of adult learning capabilities fully, we must acknowledge the experiences and rationality of their communication and learning style.

Facilitation Theory

Early childhood teachers often demonstrate facilitation theory by being a participant in active learning and reflective practice. Carl Rogers provided a viewpoint that supported the

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premise that learning will transpire via a coach, who facilitates the learning environment (Fazel, 2013). In turn, this will establish a comfort level in which the learner can accept new ideas and practices. Thus, they will not be intimidated by external influences (Fazel, 2013). Teachers who exhibit active listening skills along with a positive outlook will most likely succeed in making significant changes.

One aspect that this theory has over other approaches is that learners have far more significance within their learning environment than the facilitator's materials or teaching behaviors (Heim, 2012). The initial concept of 'assisting' a group versus 'directing' a group accentuates Rogers' non-directive approach. However, this theory can be viewed as a strengthening tool for the facilitator and learner relationship. The role of facilitator exhibits various facets. For example, a facilitator with immense patience, who is willing to accept a learner for their learning style can be more impressionable and effective (Heim, 2012). Patience as a known virtue tends to hold a stronger foundation when reflective practice and coaching are underway. Reflective listening is an active practice that is utilized within the facilitation theory (Heim, 2012). Loughran (2002) described the reflective practice as a way of being and offering an opportunity to think about a specific area to further improve on. Loughran (2002) also stated that an intentional correlation is found between reflective practice itself and what area of growth is associated with the desired action. Rogers considered that learners have critical thinking and a self-direct skillset. The facilitator uses reflective listening to assist the learner in reflecting on their current practices. Teachers who experiment, and who use reflective practice regularly, are consistently involved with refining their practices and enriching student learning environments. Teachers are updated on current best practices, and find different strategies with teaching approaches and curricula implementation (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011).

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The process includes summarizing and restating the content the learner has learned. This effort is to understand what has been communicated efficiently (Heim, 2012).

Experiential Learning Theory

Lastly, the experiential learning theory (ELT), developed by David Kolb, is an all-inclusive example of adult professional development. This theory dates to well-known thinkers such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget. ELT is grounded in a learning progression that is strengthened within cycles of action, contemplation, and one's knowledge base (Fazel, 2013).

Experiential learning is also known as learning that one completes by interacting and learning through action. Proponents of this theory agree that this type of knowledge stimulates interest in the practices they are learning, improves internal discovery fulfillment, enhances the probability of learning the material, and furthers the communication between the mentor and mentee (McCarthy, 2017). Just as with facilitation learning theory, ELT yields positive results. Professionals who take an active role in learning can master more skills. Hawtreay (2007, p. 145) stated, "Students remember only a fraction of what they hear, but most what they actively do." Creating a learning condition based solely on notions of discovery overlooks the benefits of the learning opportunity set forth by the facilitator. Setting an outline, providing feedback, and delivering a sound perspective on the learning process offers an advantage for success that is typical of higher level instruction (Dennison, 2009). Effective teaching requires embedded professional development such as coaching (Knight, 2011). Teachers who receive continuous high-quality feedback, modeling and demonstration, and reflective practice are shown to learn and implement new skills (Knight, 2009b). Knight and Cornett (2009) point out that teachers who are not given specific feedback, visual coaching aids (i.e., modeling, demonstration) and

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meaningful encouragement rarely put taught skills into practice. Multiple forms of support (e.g., goal focused, content specific trainings) given to a teacher vary, but coaching seems to be the most effective form of professional development teachers receive (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009).

Along with intentional feedback, Kolb specifies that conducting reflective practice is critical when ELT is being implemented. Kolb conducted a study that interviewed (N=10) professors regarding their lecturing practices. After reflecting on such methods, the professors gave assessments to their students to determine whether the reflective practice was adequate for their students to understand (McCarthy, 2016). However, after the assessment was conducted, less than ten students followed the protocol correctly. Some reflective practice questions were developed to assess coaching practices better. The questions that were asked used reflective coaching elements that would assist in improving the participant in future outcomes such as: (a) “To what extent and in which courses were students required to demonstrate reflective practice?”; (b) “Had lecturers undertaken written reflection themselves?”; (c) “How did students approach reflective practice?”; (d) “How seriously did they take it?” Researchers also asked, “What criteria did lecturers use to assess their reflections?” and “Which authors/theories did lecturers offer students as underpinning the value of reflective practice to the practitioner?” (Dennison, 2009, p. 2). The findings from Kolb’s study revealed that those who received reflective coaching were pleased and had appreciated the process and the outcome. These findings were due to the process of deeper thinking and because it was a way for participants to add more meaningful practice to their learning. The professors who conducted the assessments also revealed that reflective practice was a valuable tool but also understood that reflective practice is driven heavily in the professional sectors of society, an essential asset for all. Overall,

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the reflective practice was shown to be a valuable advantage for bringing professionalism to the forefront (Dennison, 2009).

What do we Know about Instructional Coaching in an Educational Environment So Far?

The concept of instructional coaching has been in existence for only a short period, while other forms of professional development in early childhood has been around since the early to mid-1960s (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018). Early childhood teachers receive professional development on a semi-routine basis. Generally, professional development is in a sit and learn atmosphere. Teachers who are in this type of learning environment rarely take back all the information learned and fully implement it in their classrooms (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018).

With Practice-Based Coaching, teachers can implement strategies learned from an expertly-trained coach in their teaching practices immediately and are then able to reflect and strengthen their teaching craft. To provide optimal coaching in an early childhood setting, the instructional coach and teacher are to build a collaborative relationship (Knight, 2011). Communication and continual coaching enhances teaching practices (Knight, 2009). McGatha (2008) states that complexities among communication and coaching relationships are under-researched, and that little is known about the dual dynamic. Knight (2011, p. 18) commented, “When teachers and coaches interact equally as partners, good things happen.” Having a collaborative relationship with an instructional coach reinforces several areas of teaching: confidence, current teaching style, and incorporation of best practices. With these areas in mind, coaching has been a tremendous asset to the early childhood education field (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018). Providing high-quality coaching to teachers is critical in an early childhood learning environment.

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The Administration on Children, Youth, & Families (2016) requires every Early Head Start/Head Start facility to have an instructional coach on their staff. Because of this requirement, federal funding has been established and allocated for the implementation of on-site instructional coaching. The instructional coaches are required to provide Practice-Based Coaching methods individually to each teacher or teaching team. Accordingly, it is imperative that relationships are built early on and establish a cohesive collaboration between the coach and the teachers. This coaching process improves overall teaching practices (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2016).

The relationship between coaches and teachers is dependent on the skills and practices that the coach and teacher set forth during the collaborative process. Although it is the responsibility of the coach to assist in improving the quality of classroom instruction, the teachers are the more critical component for ensuring that they are learning best practices as well as teaching high-quality curriculum (Knight, 2007). Coaching required teacher observation and varied coaching methods (such as shadowing, modeling, or demonstration) which the teachers choose for each session (Administration on Children, Youth, & Families, 2018). Coaches also support teaching practices by ensuring teachers can have protected time to co-plan, analyze individual student data, write an intentional curriculum, and have reflective meetings with other teachers and coaches (Knight, 2007).

Within instructional coaching, a coach's time is a critical resource that is used throughout the coaching program. Coaches spend time outside of 'teacher coaching' researching best practices, evaluating the different aspects of each teacher's style, and forming an individualized for each. When coaches spend time with teachers, in a group setting or individually, they provide optimal support for the best outcomes for the children the teachers

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serve. By participating in this style of learning, teachers are better able to meet and achieve the goals that they establish within the 'teacher/coach' collaboration (Knight, 2007).

Themes, Trends, Gaps

The current coaching methods that were utilized are consistent with adult learners and allow teaching professionals to provide constant, ongoing professional development. The three primary theories discussed (transformative, facilitation, and experiential Learning) have been thoroughly researched in contexts that are effective and they have been implemented in various professional domains. Professionals such as teachers and other educators, who are part of the K-12 education system have been using instructional coaching to improve teaching and student outcomes for several years (Knight, 2009a). Having evidenced-based information may provide insight into the potential results of instructional coaching implemented in early childhood programs, such as the Early Head Start program. The Administration on Children, Youth, & Families (2018) has provided an instructional coaching model that is geared toward educators who teach children ages birth to age three. Devine, Meyers, and Houssemand (2013) stated that individual teachers who receive instructional coaching have shown a positive impact on overall teaching mindsets, an increase of innovative teaching practices and positive views of teacher effectiveness. Although instructional coaching is provided, continued research is still needed to provide valuable information on how instructional coaches provide meaningful feedback on current teaching practices.

Empirical research conducted on coaching in early childhood classrooms as a means of developing higher quality teaching practices among teachers is significantly under-researched. Early childhood-focused empirical studies are scarce. Most empirical articles discuss coaching models, adult learning styles, and theoretical concepts that surround coaching in a K-12

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educational setting. In the studies reviewed for this thesis, the participants were involved in mixed-method research projects. These methods included in-depth interviews, quantitative-based surveys based on their opinion regarding professional development, and coaching. During the review of the literature, there is a consistent lack of research about instructional coaching with teaching professionals in an infant and toddler classroom setting. An additional gap in knowledge is the lack of teacher feedback on coaching practices within their classrooms.

Considering various coaching models are available to coaches and teachers to utilize, research studies do not provide enough evidence-based literature to successfully assess the importance of and need for instructional coaching and the models that are currently developed. Findings among the empirical articles indicate that coaching is a specific catalyst for coach and teacher collaboration efforts and the improvement of teaching strategies.

Summary

Teachers need to develop higher quality teaching practices. As such, it is critical that teachers are provided with optimal professional development. Applying coaching models will facilitate necessary professional development that teachers continuously seek, which in turn will increase growth and a long-lasting skillset that quickly shifts to teaching practices. Coaching is a valuable method for continuing teacher development. Various coaching approaches have validated the power of conveying learning and sustaining better developed teaching abilities (Devine et al., 2013). Teachers who demonstrate learned skills through ongoing coaching sessions show a greater ability to retain high-quality teaching practices versus those who receive traditional training. Chapter three presents the research design. Research details of participants, specific coaching models, study design, design instrumentation, and data analysis are shown.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research used in-depth interviews with Early Head Start teachers to understand their perceptions of the instructional coaching process. Interviews were conducted and data was analyzed using the thematic content analysis. Quantitative and qualitative strategies were both considered in the design of this research. Although quantitative methods had some appeal, utilizing a qualitative methodology was more fitting, as it provided a deeper insight on the teacher's perspective of instructional coaching.

Quantitative research stresses the importance of validation through means of analytical measurement and examination of variable correlations versus an in-depth inquiry approach (Merriam, 2009). The primary focus of quantitative methods is to explain how each determined goal of the study is accomplished. Although this method gathers an immense amount of data, the data collected only represents statistical findings that are inflexible and rigid versus informative data of an in-depth perspectives from a social context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Watson, 2015). Utilizing a quantitative design in this study would not provide the extensive details needed to fully comprehend the teacher's overall viewpoint. Similarly, obtaining data strictly through statistical means, hampers the overall mission of gathering a global perspective.

Qualitative inquiry examines the importance and quality of research methods that are non-quantitative (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative researchers consider factors based on the realities of their society, the intimate connection between the researcher and what is examined, and circumstantial limitations that develop in-depth questions (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). Researchers highlight the significance of the initial issue or problem, while attempting to pursue the meaning behind social constructs and shared experiences (Kahlke, 2014).

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The scientific view on qualitative research considers perceptions on how to think of research more as a problem of inquiry, as well as a supported research method (Maxwell, 2004). Creating a distinct design structure that embodies an essential research approach provides a significant return of rich data, driven by social constructs and significant opportunities for further qualitative exploration (Maxwell, 2004). Three foundational areas that make up a high-quality qualitative design include being naturalistic, being emergent and being purposeful.

Utilizing a naturalistic approach throughout a qualitative design indicates investigating possible circumstances as they happen organically (Laws & McLeoud, 2004). The researcher is receptive to change and observes situations as they occur; so, that findings are not predetermined. Applying a holistic open-ended style allows both the researcher and participant to naturally find emerging themes as rich dialogue increases (Laws & McLeoud, 2004).

Caelli, Ray, & Mill (2003) state that by acknowledging and familiarizing oneself about qualitative inquiry provides the researcher a more profound grasp on current occurrences or conditions as they change. Circumventing inflexible designs increases the opportunity to find more avenues or breakthroughs as they form. Applying the emergent approach encourages critical thought processes to transpire as situations unfold or even change (Laws & McLeoud, 2004).

Being purposeful when selecting specific topics for a study may produce powerful, yet informative, data sets. Intentional population selection, such as purposeful sampling, presents insight about the overall social experience (Creswell, 2007). Likewise, expressing the interests of particular studies may establish a greater appeal towards more in-depth exploration and connection within the confines of a social construct (Kahlke, 2014).

Goals and Objectives for Qualitative Research: Advantages and Limitations of In-depth Interviews

The goals and objectives of qualitative methodology involve various areas of open-ended inquiry that measure personal views and emotional responses (Daly, 2007). The research interview approach “is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 107). Advantages that in-depth interviews offer vary among studies, such as gathering specific information, so qualitative researchers can utilize in-depth interviews as a method to gain insight from different perspectives. Researchers can also learn and comprehend the lives of people and the world in which they live, as their experiences are innately different (Daly, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A realistic model for conducting in-depth interviews is responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Responsive interviewing provides an open-ended opportunity for researchers to explore new ideas and to recommend concepts and explanations that are different from their own.

In addition to the advantages of in-depth interviews, there are limitations as well. Conducting interviews presents multiple layers that make up an effective data collection method. Although effective, the overall interview process can be time intensive. Boyce and Neale (2006) report that interviews consume a great deal of time throughout the whole process. After concluding the interviews, transcription and a descriptive analysis is completed promptly. The beauty of conducting in-depth interviews is the wealth of evocative information that is given by the participants. Due to the small sample size, generalization did not occur or work effectively.

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Design

As stated, this research employed a qualitative research strategy. The interview schedule utilized consisted of open-ended questions. The participants included seven Early Head Start teachers, who have been coached within the last 12-months, to assess their skill sets and to obtain constructive feedback on coaching practices. The research examined the data from the in-depth interviews using a thematic approach.

Background

I currently work at the Early Head Start facility as an instructional coach and have also taught as a classroom teacher at the same facility. As a current instructional coach, I did not recruit or interview teachers whom I currently coach, as this is a conflict of interest to the research. Instead, teachers were recruited from other coaching teams that were a good representation of the teaching staff at the EHS program.

The research examined the acceptance of Practice-Based Coaching among teachers. The study also provided an outlet for teachers to describe their teaching practices along with coaching interventions, as well as their direct perception of the coaching experience. Furthermore, the research has aspired to comprehend the influences within the teaching environment that may impact our perceptions of how teachers view instructional coaching.

Practice-Based Coaching was the primary coaching model that was examined throughout the interviews with seven Early Head Start teachers. Discussions centered around perceptions of current coaching practices and the teachers' recollections of their coaching sessions while using the Practice-Based Coaching model. Various areas of this model (i.e., coaching strategies, tools, and feedback) were researched alongside teachers to seek a deeper understanding of the cyclical process teachers endure.

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Alongside the Practice-Based Coaching model, instructional coaching incorporates three adult learning theories: transformative, facilitation, & experiential learning. These three theories were studied and evaluated for the relevance to coaching and teacher development.

Participants

The participants were teachers recruited from Early Head Start classrooms who had at least one year of consistent instructional coaching between August 2017 and July 2018. The Early Head Start program had benefitted from instructional coaching when relationships were built and maintained throughout the program. The Early Head Start program consists of 24 teachers who were potential candidates for the study. Of the 24 teachers, seven teachers met all specified criteria. To reiterate, I did not interview any teachers who were associated with my current coaching teams.

To ensure maximum recruitment of participants, purposeful sampling was utilized to assist in identifying and seeking participants in the most extensive range possible. Each participant was recruited by email and through face-to-face contact. After verbal/email confirmation, the participants provided dates when they were available to participate in the study. Upon final approval, each participant and I had met and initiated each in-depth interview.

Participants were asked specific demographic questions to better define their perspective, such as "How long have you been teaching children in Early Head Start?" Or "What is your post-secondary educational background?" In addition, participants were given a unique identifier (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2) and remained anonymous throughout the entire-research endeavor; this fostered teachers to speak freely out fear of repercussions. I also provided a more accurate picture of their perceptions of instructional coaching. Consent for in-depth interviews and audio recordings were given along with a full detailed description of the study; research

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intent was discussed at the time of the meeting. Four of the seven teachers agreed to be audio recorded. Two of the teachers opted for non-recorded interviews. The seventh teacher started her interview on-site, however due to scheduling conflicts her interview was completed via email and digitally secured.

Procedure

Prior to initiating the study, ethical protocols were followed as per the policy of the Institution Review Board (IRB) and the University of Central Oklahoma. I developed a proposal that outlined the parameters of this study and the overall contributions for future studies. After receiving expedited approval from the IRB committee, the participant recruitment began. Teachers who were selected for the study were contacted initially in person, then followed up via email with a complete description and expectations of the study. Additionally, participants were provided times in which the in-depth interview would occur, so that it would coincide with their work schedule. With explicit permission from the site director, teachers were afforded the time to step out of their classrooms to conduct the in-depth interview. Each session ranged from 20-45 minutes long. Each participant was given a digital consent form to sign via tablet, along with an additional consent form for audio recording. They were given the option to participate or to decline the audio recording session.

Instrument

During each interview, a 13-item, open-ended, semi-structured interview was used to provoke thoughts and perspectives from teachers on instructional coaching. Additionally, the interview questionnaire was piloted by three external teachers that were not a part of the study. The non-participant teachers were given an initial interview questionnaire to review and to provide feedback. The information provided by the non-participant teachers was essential, as

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their advice and suggestions assisted in refining the initial questionnaire. The feedback initiated an extensive review of the interview protocol, leading to a comprehensible revised version (see Appendix C).

Audio recordings of interviews were used for data analysis purposes. Initial consent was given prior to the beginning of the in-depth interview; however, participants were also informed that audio recording was voluntary and they could discontinue this method at any time.

After each subsequent interview, audio recordings and transcriptions were conducted to measure the validity of each session. After each interview was transcribed, participants were contacted for a follow-up meeting to discuss the initial findings and to clarify any information that was provided.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews as the primary source of data collection, provided an opportunity to obtain a rich dialogue of their personal coaching experiences. The discussion items were used more as a guide than as a strict interview format.

The interview questionnaire was developed around the adult learning theory, with the following questions as the base of each interview:

1. What perceptions do infant/toddler teachers have regarding instructional coaching methods?
2. How do Early Head Start teachers depict the influence coaching has made on their teaching practices?
3. Which portions of instructional coaching do teachers find valuable and non-valuable?
4. What factors influence the way teachers view instructional coaching?

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Data Analysis

Data analysis method selected for this study consisted of thematic content analysis, open-coding, and axial coding. Each interview lasted an average of 28 minutes with sessions ranging from 19-47 minutes in length. After every session, the interview was transcribed and reviewed multiple times for validity, while utilizing audio play back. The transcription process was to preserve the integrity of each interview to increase the validity of the research. After each interview was transcribed, open-coding was performed to identify distinct concepts and categories. I conducted a textual analysis to search for specific terms among all in-depth interviews. This method involved counting the amount of times a specific word appeared within the field notes. After reading through each transcript, ‘trending’ words that stood out were coded. Following the textual analysis, the preliminary data was gathered and reorganized into categories. Axial coding was then utilized to define the central phenomenon and to explore the causal conditions of each interview. During this phase, each in-depth interview was coded based on presented themes and patterns that were placed into distinct categories. With the data collected, groups and subgroups were utilized to further refine the associations and perceptions discussed in the interview, thus creating the four primary themes (see Table 2). This approach allowed me to delineate, find implications, synthesize, and provide relational evidence of data collected (Gibbs, 2007).

Summary

A qualitative methods research design was used in this study. The research utilized in this chapter directly correlated with basic qualitative and thematic analysis of teachers in an Early Head Start program. Recruitment of teaching professionals was conducted efficiently to maximize research participation. In-depth interviews were conducted, transcribed, analyzed, and

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coded to search for common themes, as well as specific outliers found in the various responses given. Concluding the qualitative analysis procedure, the data was aggregated and further refined. Chapter four discusses the findings of the in-depth interviews and provides insight into teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The focus of this study was to discover the elements and insights of coaching among teachers in an Early Head Start facility in Oklahoma. Each experience is outlined by different accounts of coaching based on influence and perception. While situations differ between each teacher, I acknowledged the importance and value of the teacher's experiences. The viewpoints that were offered, "painted" a picture that depicts meaningful relationships and collaborative efforts between instructional coach's and teachers. When considering the significance of coaching, the impacts and effects on teachers were monumental. The impressions of coaching were primarily viewed as being influential, reflective, and supportive.

This research attempted to understand the relationships among instructional coaches and teachers. As a way of showing respect to the role of the participant, the title of teacher is often utilized. As noted in this section and study, 'Teachers' and 'Participants' are used synonymously when interview samples are provided. This provides a contextual setting on how the teachers' "voice" is heard. This section also encompasses thematic analysis based on the in-depth interviews.

Sample Description

Table 1 provides detailed descriptions of all seven participants. All participants (100%) stated that they have been in a consistent coaching environment for at least 12 months. Five (71%) reported that they had a consistent instructional coach for at least three years. The remaining two (28%) teachers stated that they had less than two years of consistent instructional coaching. All the participants met the requirements and were well qualified: One (14%) participant held a CDA and the remaining six (86%) participants held a Bachelor's degree in Child Development or a related field.

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<u>Participant</u>	<u>Years of Experience</u>	<u>Years as an EHS Teacher</u>	<u>Degree Held</u>
1	15-20	4	A.A.
2	3-5	4	B.S.
3	3-5	<2	B.S.
4	3-5	<2	B.S.
5	10-15	11	B.S.
6	3-5	4	B.S.
7	3-5	3	B.S.

The selected teachers demonstrated knowledge in coaching practices and expressed their thoughts on the overall impact it has made on their professional development, as well as in their classroom.

Teacher Perceptions

The participants explained in detail what areas of coaching were essential to them, as well the experiences that were not as meaningful. The coaching experiences focused on coaching support received and how the type of coaching impacted their teaching style. Among all participants, multiple topics were revealed and further expanded. Although various discussions occurred, similar reactions were given. Teachers' responses were focused on the benefits of coaching (e.g., perception, acknowledgement, feedback, modeling) and how coaching influences their teaching methods. Intense dialogue provided an opportunity to investigate deeper into the

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effects of coaching and teachers' reflective practice. Nearly all (80%) of the participants stated that reflective practice or coaching was beneficial when coaching was occurring.

Perception and Acknowledgement

During the interview process, participants provided compelling overall statements at the beginning of the interview that offered insight on coaching, which established the theme development of the study. A more profound reflective practice transpired during the interviews as rapport was established between the participants and I. When discussing the perception of coaching the teachers were vulnerable enough to express their opinions in a safe environment. One participant stated, "Coaching gives me a different perspective on the various practices on teaching children and the way they behave and things like that. I think it makes me more aware. It's practically shaped my teaching style." Another participant replied,

She kind of offers just a different perspective, basically we need to change this whole thing. It's so like you know we were doing it [coaching] in the morning right before our day got started...I had no knowledge of best practice. So, as I came here, and I think I learned best practice by being coached or observing other people.

As teachers commented on the elements of coaching, different viewpoints emerged, yet each statement mirrored the other, concluding that the coaching process was portrayed as a useful tool.

Peering deeper into the teacher's perceptions, acknowledgement and constructive support were a reoccurring topic that held substantive meaning. A participant was very explicit when she noted being acknowledged was very important when being coached. She stated,

I like to say we do a good job in the classroom. Before it felt like we were just told to do "this and that" and so we need more comments like, "Oh...you did a great job with the

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activity.”, “you did a good job at this, or you are doing good in the classroom.” So, we like this a lot better instead of just straightforward, ‘Oh well, I don’t like this or I don’t like that.’ So now it feels like we are doing something right!

Teachers expressed that being acknowledged for their teaching practices and methods was one of the most beneficial aspects of coaching that they had received.

Feedback and Modeling Best Practice

As the themes were developing throughout the in-depth interview sessions, teachers were digging deeper and speaking more on the value of coaching in the context of consistency and constructive criticism. During one session, a participant was discussing the benefit of consistent feedback after a coaching session. The participant stated,

Hindsight as insight is something you know because it teaches you. After a couple of times of being shown written feedback, I could reflect on what was being shown [coached] afterward, and after a couple of times I could catch myself and could correct my actions because of the coaching I received.

Hearing this statement for what it was and how the teacher expressed it, demonstrated growth and progress through instructional coaching. She followed up with,

You know with or without my IC in the room, I was like ‘oh this is exactly what you were talking about.’ I was fixing it at the moment, and I recognized it. So, that is probably the biggest thing I’ve gotten out of it [coaching].

A teacher who had struggled with providing high-quality for an age group she was unfamiliar with, had made a break through, all because of a collaborative partnership with her instructional coach.

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Coaching multiple classrooms throughout the day, provides a bit of a challenge for coaches as teachers expect a level of modeling and demonstration. Another participant provided specifics on the coaching method she preferred, she responded,

Demonstrating [the preferred coaching method] is the method I usually choose. My first IC I had, would ask and provide a choice, and I would respond with what method I wanted. However, when the next coach came on she would shadow [observe] & model and naturally would notice the teacher's needs.

With modeling and demonstration occurring throughout the coaching sessions, teachers have the freedom of choosing which coaching method they would want shown. The same method is utilized when feedback is provided. Teachers are given different choices in how they receive their feedback. One participant stated,

My current IC is good at pointing out what we do right. However, my former IC would point out flaws and had less positive praise; there is a big difference between the two coaches that I have had. My first coach gave feedback, but not in enough time, whereas my current coach gave feedback the same day in 10-15 minute sessions.

Additionally, another participant echoed the need for feedback, but during the coaching session. She stated, "I like when the coach comes into our classroom. Our current coach comes in and explains the teaching style to you, 'can you try this?', or 'do you think this will work?'. I feel there's more positive feedback." Providing reflective coaching with the means of feedback sessions and rich dialogue reinforces the foundation of a strong coaching partnership.

All the participant's responses gathered throughout the interviews shed light on the themes used from the thematic analysis. With the consideration of the diverse dialogue, the

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participants collectively provided the thematic framework. The themes that emerged from the interviews consisted of (a) coaching provides support; (b) coaching supports teachers; (c) relationships support change; and (d) consistency supports stability (see Table 2).

Table 2			
<i>Themes and Sub-Themes</i>			
<u>Coaching Provides Support</u>	<u>Coaching Supports Feedback</u>	<u>Relationships Support Change</u>	<u>Consistency Provides Stability</u>
Communication	Resources	Trust	Scheduling
Observation	Best Practice	Rapport	Structure
Training	Reflective Practice	Encouragement	
Protected Time	Modeling	Constructive Support	
	Demonstration	Transparency	

The Impact of Coaching

In the interview protocol provided to all the participants (100%) stated that coaching had positively impacted their teaching practices in one form or another. The participants specified that coaching was a positive tool that provided them awareness regarding their teaching strategies, and that coaching provided a structured environment to learn different methods to use within their classrooms. Teachers who stated coaching as being effective, sought their instructional coach for their familiarity of best practice often. A teacher stated,

Being more understanding and knowing, it's hard to be in the classroom. I am very knowledgeable, and I am positive. There were so many times that I had questions and she [IC] already knew exactly how to handle the situation, even when I was struggling with in the classroom.

Elements derived from researched based practices played a pivotal role in the success of each participant interviewed.

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Coaches with Dual Roles

Instructional coaches from this program once held dual roles. They were both an instructional coach, as well as the teacher's supervisor. Having this type of ambiguous dual role hampered the quality of coaching a teacher would receive. For instance, the question, "Has coaching shaped your teaching style? If so, how?" was asked and teachers responded frankly by describing exactly how coaching had influenced their teaching practices. One participant stated,

I feel like it made my relationship with my IC better because when she suggests things for me, I don't feel like it's coming from a "you did this wrong" kind of place, versus the like when she was my supervisor.

Once this combined role was severed, teachers responded more to coaching. Teachers described instructional coaches as being more empathetic. One participant replied,

So yeah I mean they are a leader. This is a tough question. My instructional coach, or an instructional coach in general. I feel like my IC is very empathetic and I feel like she is curious about how you feel like sometimes you know you get frustrated [with the kids] she's like, "Oh are you okay?"

Again, this repetitive response of relationship building, that resonates within the team (coach and teacher) further solidifying the partnership.

Applications of Practice-Based Coaching in Coaching Sessions

The PBC model encourages the use of specific coaching elements to enrich teaching practices. Coaches provide teachers individual based support, create a 'safe' environment for teachers to reflect on their own practices, and offer various coaching techniques. Participants often recognized the following coaching elements throughout each interview, (a) Feeling supported (b) Receiving feedback; and (c) Receiving reflective coaching. Participants suggested

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that they felt supported when the PBC model was utilized and when reflective coaching sessions were conducted.

Feeling Supported

Teachers mentioned on numerous occasions, that coaching provides a various means of support (e.g., feedback, confidentiality, action planning). One participant shared,

The IC would ask how the teacher felt during the coaching session. She would share observations with each teacher, and would brainstorm. The IC would come back to share feedback during naptime. She [the IC] would talk to the whole group and the same independently for every teacher.

Another teacher that shared the same instructional coach stated, “With our former coach, I did not see feedback notes and feedback was not daily unless requested.” Teachers who shared an instructional coach often had the same coaching experiences. The interview data also summarized the coaching strategies which were utilized to influence teaching practices and set goals for improvement with the teachers correlated with coaches providing continuity and consistency.

Receiving Feedback

The participants indicated that instructional coaching provided an overall higher level of support from their instructional coach. A teacher reported,

Options [coaching methods] were nice to choose from in the coaching session. Our preference was important, as she could model different ways to talk or interact with the children. Feedback was done with our first IC usually the same day she observed us, but the information would sound the same from week to week. However, our current IC is more involved in our classroom with more coaching and provides positive feedback.

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While listening to the responses the participants were giving about coaching preference, it was indicative that most teachers were partial to receiving multi-layer support. A co-teacher that participated in the study stated, “I am given more options of how I want to be observed as it helps give me more ideas on working with the children, either side by side coaching or shadowing with the children.”

Reflective Coaching

Each teacher who participated in the study spoke on reflective coaching. Reflective coaching is provided to teachers as an additional layer of support in the PBC model. When discussing reflective coaching, a teacher stated,

After she comes into our class I come into her office, and we talk about what she observed, things I did well and things I should work on. Also, if I had any questions for her or if there were things she suggested or if I needed to have our Education Coordinator help me. She’s always suggesting things to help make the classroom better.

Most of the participants revealed that the coaching sessions were constructive and beneficial. The participants reported that the coaching sessions directly impacted the way they teach, and how they view best practices. Additionally, the participants communicated the need for coaching, as it is a necessary tool for high-quality teaching and implementing best practices among young children. As a participant stated,

Someone that supports you has your back. Someone that has more experience in teaching and to have an IC that can help us in the classroom, that can guide us to what we need, such as information or even to provide resources, that helps!

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Established connections and encouragement teachers displayed in the interviews was evident as each account was detailed with specific coaching practices that were noted as beneficial and helpful.

Analyzing Instructional Coaching Themes: Foundations of Relationships and Support

Most participants stated various ways they receive support from their instructional coaches. Although different, the items mentioned offered insight into the teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching methods. Having support systems in place, providing a supportive leadership team, sharing strategies and building a collaborative relationship, and affording protected time for essential teacher planning were just a few items stated in the interview responses. A participant shared that the top three areas where support was well represented in instructional coaching were: 1) Being a resource for ideas; 2) Being a new set of eyes; and 3) Being open-minded. Although teacher's independently shared similar viewpoints, the gathered data compliments the central themes and sub-themes of this study.

While reviewing the noted aspects of the four themes listed, teachers openly expressed the characteristics of coaching that they felt were the most meaningful towards their teaching practices. The first theme that surfaced "Coaching Provides Support" was found early on during the interviews. The characteristics of coaching (e.g., Communication, protected time, training, observation) that were mentioned were depicted in terms that teachers utilize and associate with throughout their daily teaching routines. One aspect of coaching that participants found important was communication. A teacher noted, "So, there was less communication from our previous IC, there's more now, I can see more positive feedback with us in the classroom and she gets involved with the children as well and coaching us more." Throughout all the

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interviews, every participant stated that communication was the primary characteristic when coaching took place.

Another attribute mentioned was the need for “protected time.” When discussing additional support, one participant stated,

Oh, I definitely feel like if we had protected time that would be helpful. I have learned through instructional coaching that like I don't do well for myself, giving myself protected time because some teachers it is easy for them to do it [taking protected time] leaving and like go into the workroom.

Teachers often voiced the importance of having protected time to be able to work on additional required tasks (e.g., lesson planning, anecdotal records, administrative tasks) and working on their own professional development.

Next, teachers expressed that training was an important part of their professional growth. One participant responded, “They [instructional coaches] just got more experience in the field, and they've seen more, you know, have more trainings under their belts.” Another participant replied,

Well I like it [coaching] because they can tell me how it is supposed to be. She [Instructional Coach] kind of shows us how to do something, what we weren't doing and stepping in and doing on the spot training and coaching, because there's a lot of times we get stuck at that point, but then they can jump in.

Teachers often considered coaching as a significant source of training and an increase of knowledge within their classrooms.

Teachers also provided compelling statements surrounding the power of observation. Teachers who are receptive to instructional coaching practices benefited from frequent

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observation sessions. A teacher stated, “I like someone that’s upper management [instructional coach] that could come into the classroom and help us with teaching and interacting with the kids, ‘cause they might see something different than what we see with the children.” Although teachers communicated specific areas of support that they felt were helpful, other areas emerged and provided insight on growth and progress.

The second theme, “Coaching Supports Feedback” was the next layer added to the level of support teachers revealed. As an additional offering, coaches give intentional and meaningful feedback as a way of reinforcing high-quality practices. Among the noted basics of feedback, teachers also provided information that created sub-layers of support. In specific discussions, teachers recognized the alternate support methods (e.g., resources, best practice, reflective practice, modeling, demonstration) coaches offer. In the early stages of the interview process, a participant expressed the value of having varying resources as a teacher. She stated,

To have an open office to come in and vent if we need it and to be a support. The support helps. I think that’s my main thing. If we need anything or resources for the classroom. Someone that supports you, that has your back. Someone that has more experience in teaching, if we don’t have that, they can help us in the classroom and that can guide us to what we need, like information or resources to provide, so that helps.

As an instructional coach, there are times when coaching should be flexible and versatile with the teacher as there are various individual needs. Sometimes being a “soundboard” and a confidant to teachers may be all they need at times. Another sub-layer that appeared among many teachers was the utilization of best practice. One participant responded,

I feel like when you bring a coach in, they’re automatically doing everything at the best level possible to set an example like this is how you know these situations, should be

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approached like this is the best way to do it. I feel like I've gotten a better grasp on best practices through coaching.

While listening to this specific statement, subtle nuances were revealed. The teacher conveyed that instructional coaching improved her teaching skill sets and that best practice was a vital component in coaching overall.

Next, the participants demonstrated reflective process during the interview sessions. As teachers were "working" through their thoughts they were actively learning through inquiry and meaningful exploration, another form of growth. Throughout the interviews, teachers provided common responses that addressed reflective practice. One teacher recalled, "Our IC would pull us [teachers] out of the classroom at nap time for 10-15 minutes to discuss the coaching session held earlier that day. I find this very helpful." Similarly, another participant stated, "Our IC would give positive feedback during our reflective, 'You did good at this' or commented on our different weekly accomplishments." Seeing the teachers in a 'reflective state' confirmed that reflective practice was a common method utilized in between each coaching session.

Finally, the participants weighed in on the advantages of modeling and demonstration. Teachers chose which coaching method they would prefer for each coaching session. When discussing the benefits teachers received from instructional coaching, a participant noted, "Yes, teachers learn from the IC; [teachers] learn more from shadowing & modeling, extra brainstorming, new ideas." An additional insight provided by another participant stated,

I like the modeling. I like more for someone showing me. It made me try something out like in a different way than myself. I am a hands-on person so I feel like, 'Ok can you show me, I'm visual? So, can you help me, like model this way?' or asking me 'How would I change that?'

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Similarly, demonstration was another popular coaching technique the participant spoke highly of. Additionally, the teacher continued to explain her viewpoint of preferred coaching methods, “To have someone helping you out and giving you demonstrations and feedback is the main key. You always need feedback. We [teachers] grow in different stages of teaching which is helpful.” Though modeling and demonstration were shown to be essential in the coaching process, teachers expressed the importance of having an established relationship with their coach.

The third theme, “Relationships Support Change” appeared frequently throughout each discussion. Several important elements surfaced during each interview. More specifically, teachers stated that trust, rapport, encouragement, and constructive support were some of the traits they valued the most. The value of having a relationship between a coach and teacher was often discussed. The next set of sub-layers found in the third theme provided an in-depth context of relationship support and trust. One participant stated,

Okay so she'll mention if there's things that need to be done or she will ask me what I need in the classroom to help make the classroom run better and other things like that.

We talk it out and try to come up with a good solution together.

Vulnerability was detected during this section and teachers were willing to share personal accounts of rapport that they built with their coach. Teachers expressed the need for a relationship with their instructional coach, and how it impacts their teaching. A teacher shared,

Some teachers didn't have a great relationship with their IC, they felt like it was just all negative all the time. So, they felt that ‘whatever I do is going to be negative, you know are going to be wrong.’ But you know towards the end when it became more positive, that's when I really saw them [teachers] opening up and warming up.

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Besides having a strong rapport between the teacher and coach, having a balanced amount of encouragement is necessary. Encouragement, a necessary tool for relationship building and empathy was a common thread among the interviews, more so with one teacher.

The teacher stated,

You know I feel like she cares about how you are feeling...I will say I feel like instructional coaching has improved a lot over the last year since it's been no supervision. I have seen a difference in the coaching I receive. I think it goes back to having more time to be able to do those things [coaching duties].

Alongside encouragement, constructive support mirrors feedback and praise. A participant stated,

So specifically, with my IC I think it's been good, it hasn't been as consistent and she's been up front in the sense of 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease' because we are not struggling bad and some of the other classrooms may need a lot more support. I think her focus has been helping to get some of the classrooms back to 'let's not let this boat sink'. She's still very open to any time we have struggles. She is very helpful and she just stepped in where we needed and like took over.

This specific teacher was very vocal on the impact of coaching practices, especially when it regarded other classrooms other than her own. Her statement presented additional information on the implications of having a balanced case load. In addition to constructive support, coaches and teachers must possess an understanding of providing transparency. One participant disclosed her feelings on transparency,

[I] Felt like someone in a higher role [instructional coach] are upfront and may say 'Okay well here's our approach.' or 'Guys we did ask you a couple times how can we do this.'

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So, we've got very strict on things. Our IC talks to us first instead of just going straight to them [upper management].

Although relationships are built overtime, the participants appeared to have a congruent thought on what a coaching relationship entails.

The last and final theme, "Consistency Provides Stability", appeared through select participants. Teachers pointed out that consistency and stability is essential when coaching occurs. When discussing overall improvements for coaching techniques, one teacher expressed scheduling as a form of consistency,

ICs have a different schedule. So, you know I've had an IC that came in for an hour at a time one day a week. At the same time, which was good because it was very consistent, but also may be coming in at different times of the day, I kind of like it when it's broken up and an hour [at once] is just kind of a long time.

When this participant mentioned the importance of having a schedule, triggered a thought on how teachers hold coaches accountable. Remaining consistent with teachers supports a solid routine, that incorporates a level of expectation from both parties.

The last sub-layer the participants shared, was an invaluable construct coaches attempt to provide. Instructional coaching builds in various layers to enhance teaching practices. The participant stated, "The IC would come into classroom and coach different structures of coaching to help with the teachers in the classroom. So, the IC would come in and ask [the teachers] which coaching model they would like, shadowing, modeling, or demonstration." Keeping a consistent schedule and maintaining structure among teachers, sends a message of ongoing connection and communication.

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Summary

According to the in-depth interviews, four primary themes surfaced from the data collected. The reflections of instructional coaching appeared as (1) coaching provides support, (2) coaching supports feedback, (3) relationships support change, and (4) consistency provides stability with Early Head Start teachers. These themes uncovered coaching insights perceived by teachers. Given that coaching is a proven professional development model, teachers will continue to grow and succeed in meaningful practice. The ultimate benefit teachers gain from instructional coaching is the learning and implementation of high-quality teaching practices.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

“As a coach your goal is to make teachers experience being supported fully as themselves. Your way of being will cause teachers to establish trust with you and your way of being consistent, being authentic, being honest, and being trustworthy, which will create safety for the teacher”
Kelly Ramsey (2018)

Discussion

In 2017, the Office of Head Start (OHS) implemented a federally funded coaching protocol to support teachers in both Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs. Various researchers have documented support for this type of professional development. It is vital that professional development programs incorporate the perceptions and views of the teachers, so best practices are transferred to improve pedagogy. Practice-Based Coaching provided the opportunity for reflective practice, which must be connected to the coaching experience. The purpose of this study was to investigate the insights and experiences of Early Head Start teachers with practice base coaching methods. The teachers who provided informative feedback identified areas in which coaching supported their teaching and areas needed to improve the coaching experience.

Furthermore, the data collected from this study, served as a tool to improve the overall professional development program of the facility being studied. Sustaining and maintaining any coaching model requires intentional training and refining best practice (Knight, 2011). The key findings noted in this study correlated with the direct influences centered around teacher’s coaching perceptions. Teachers spoke about the importance of instructional coaching and how their professional development was influenced by the Practice-Based Coaching model.

An examination of the teachers’ responses suggested an overwhelmingly positive response for instructional coaching within their classrooms. Among the responses, teachers voiced their opinions on what aspects of coaching were more influential than others. More

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specifically, when coaches discontinued their dual roles as supervisors and began coaching independently. The research indicates that instructional coaching will enhance teaching practices for all teachers across both Early Head Start and Head Start programs.

This study may impact professional development trainings teaching staff receive throughout the program year. Reflections on the Practice-Based Coaching model and highlights of the findings, limitations, implications, and my discoveries of instructional coaching will be discussed further.

Findings

Instructional coaching experiences rooted in best practice that foster teacher support and professional development must connect with the teachers' professional needs and routine teaching practices of teachers. It is imperative that instructional coaching embeds continuous modeling and teacher support that encourages ongoing learning. There are positive correlations when applying coaching methods coupled with adult learning theories (e.g., reflective practice, active learning, and communication). This study supports the transformative learning theory and their assertion that adult learners are expected to question their assumptions and the principles of their surrounding environments to determine if their thinking is accurate (Fazel, 2013). Teacher's shared that their coaching experiences and reflective practices were an important asset to their teaching improvements. Williams (2001) suggests that individuals who participate actively in what they are being taught and utilize reflective practice will naturally question their own methods. Then, when teachers engage in evidence-based reflection, their perspectives begin to transform.

In addition, this study promotes Carl Rogers' facilitation theory in a manner that reflects the teachers decisions of teachers on how to add to the coaching sessions. Many teachers

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revealed their own opinions and contributions through active learning. Heim (2012) asserted that utilizing patience and accepting an individual for where they are in the learning process strengthens the collaborative partnership. Teachers may choose not to contribute to a coaching session. Facilitators should respect the teachers' voice and viewpoints, as well as continuing to build stronger connections (Heim, 2012, p. 293).

Moreover, the research suggests a strong association with Kolb's experiential learning theory. Teachers expressed that their learning increased by interacting and actively participating while receiving coaching. Proponents of the experiential learning theory agree that knowledge stimulates interest in the practices learned, increases the probability of learning, and furthers the communication between the coach and teacher (McCarthy, 2017). Additionally, the study upholds the concept of ongoing communication between an instructional coach and a teacher. As communication is a relevant and critical tool to the collaborative coaching effort, the amount of correspondence is just as crucial as it sustains active learning (Kolb, 1984). Instructional coaches use teacher's ideas and opinions to navigate the coaching experience, and to ensure communication is centered around the teacher's thinking process (Knight, 2011).

Limitations

It is important to note there are inherent limitations of this study. This study was done in a specific geographic location. The sampling was limited and small. During the recruitment phase of the study, eight participants were recruited for the in-depth interviews. Of the eight potential candidates, only seven teachers agreed to do the study. The shortage of participants may have limited the ability to gain more insight into instructional coaching practices with Early Head Start teachers. Of the available 48 teachers in the Head Start/Early Head Start program, 24 teachers were ineligible due to non-qualifying factors (e.g., classroom age group, conflict of

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interest). Teachers (n=12) who teach children in the three to five-year-old classrooms, were automatically disqualified. Furthermore, I was coaching the remaining 12 Early Head Start teachers which by default would compromise the validity of the data. Of the remaining 24 teachers, 17 Early Head Start teachers did not qualify as they did not meet “work timeframe” criteria eligibility of 12 months or more of consistent coaching practices. New hires were not considered for this study.

Having a limited number of participants from only one facility provided insight into a singular program experience. Gaining access to other agencies/programs to conduct additional interviews may have brought in a more robust viewpoint of instructional coaching from a different diverse teaching perspective.

Additional limitations that were not factored into the research included age, race, ethnicity, and gender. Including the additional information may have made a difference in the results.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

Much like the coaching practices and strategies discussed by Knight (2011), relationships and support are the primary factors when instructional coaching occurs with teachers. Essential coaching methods and techniques foster collaborative partnerships to ensure teachers are successful. This study focuses on revealing perceptions of Early Head Start teachers regarding instructional coaching in the classroom and the transformation of their professional development. Instructional coaching is intended to shed light on the need for additional research for high-quality teaching practices in infant-toddler settings. The data reflects the necessity of instructional coaching in the classroom and the importance of reflective practice in collaborative partnerships.

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The results of this study could benefit the overall program, teachers, and instructional coaches. With increased program awareness of teachers' perceptions of instructional coaching, programs can make positive changes (e.g., coaching methods, communication, intentional collaboration) that promote effective teaching practices and support. When considering the teacher's voice and ultimately their perceptions, the value of teaching rises considerably (Knight, 2011).

Furthering Practices among Instructional Coaches and Teachers

An instructional coach and teacher partnership depend heavily on additional components to be fully successful in a coaching environment. Eliciting knowledge of the Practice-Based Coaching model and demonstrating the method consistently undoubtedly will provide positive outcomes in early childhood classrooms. By Advocating for instructional coaching, other early childhood programs will be informed about this type of professional development. Supporting these specific elements will enhance the overall goal of instructional coaching:

- **Informing Leadership**
The results of this qualitative study can inform administrators and leadership on the impact and the need for instructional coaching and reflective practice in infant-toddler classrooms.
- **Understanding Instructional Coaching Practices**
Additionally, the familiarity of coaching practices reflected in this study will reinforce and influence the growth and sustainability of high-quality teachers and lower turn-over within the program.
- **Data Utilization to Inform Best Practice**
Data provided from this study could influence future selections of professional development training provided to teaching staff.
- **Continuation of Coaching and Supporting Teachers' Efforts**
The ongoing coaching and development of teachers' professional learning will constructively influence their teaching practices. According to the data collected, instructional coaching will provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of collaborative efforts and coaching relationships.

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Implications among Different Studies

Previous research studies have only documented perceptions of instructional coaching from the viewpoint of Pre-K and K-12 teachers. With little to no research conducted for instructional coaching for teachers of infant-toddler classrooms, it is imperative that future research continues, as the need for providing higher-quality care in early childhood classrooms is becoming more apparent. This study provided insight into teachers who are responsible for developing the minds of tomorrow. Providing evidence-based methods coupled with reflective coaching enables a teacher to unlock their potential and to dig deep to refine their teaching practices. Overall, continuing instructional coaching with Early Head Start teachers will greatly improve teaching and coaching practices. Further research on instructional coaching should continue, as it will inform current coaching models and teaching practices.

Personal Discovery of Instructional Coaching

As an active researcher in child development, I have always wanted to further best practice within early childhood, specifically with infants and toddlers. Instructional coaching has always been a part of my journey and has impacted my learning and my skill-set as an early childhood professional. Since starting as an infant-toddler teacher, I have always craved learning best practice and how to refine my own teaching methods. In five years, I have had a full immersion experience of instructional coaching, both as a teacher and as an instructional coach. I have witnessed positive outcomes within my own classroom and classrooms of other teachers at my facility because of instructional coaching. When viewing various types of early childhood classrooms, there is a clear distinction between programs that employ instructional coaching and those that do not. There is a clear evidence of high-quality practices of classrooms when coaching is conducted. The teacher's reflections taught me characteristics of successful coaching

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sessions that I will utilize in my own trainings. I am proud to be an instructional coach, providing teachers with the essential tools for creating opportunities and promoting success.

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to discover the perceptions of instructional coaching with Early Head Start teachers and how to sustain teachers' voice in coaching practices through qualitative research methods. Knight (2011, p.20) stated, "Partnership is about shared learning as much as it is about shared power." Encouraging teachers to utilize their creativity and their critical thinking skills will empower them to implement skills learned (Knight, 2009c).

As I completed my study, I reflected on my overall coaching experiences and research endeavors. The teachers' in-depth interviews provided meaningful insight of instructional coaching and information to assist in refining coaching practices. This study encapsulated the perceptions teachers have on their coaching experiences and their professional development. The overarching research question that led the study, (a) How do Early Head Start teachers perceive instructional coaching methods, provoked a curiosity on how to improve the collaborative relationship between the instructional coach and teacher. Additionally, sub-inquiries were used as a reflective guide to assist in attaining deeper dialogue, such as: (b) What perceptions do infant/toddler teachers have regarding instructional coaching methods?; (c) How do Early Head Start teachers describe the influence of coaching on their teaching practices?; (d) Which portions of instructional coaching do teachers find valuable and less valuable?; (e) What factors influence the way teachers view instructional coaching? Furthermore, the themes that surfaced throughout the study revolved around support, communication, and relationships. The four themes were noted as coaching provides support, coaching supports feedback, relationships support change, and consistency supports stability.

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Additionally, the findings suggested that infant-toddler teachers benefited from instructional coaching and reflective practice, thus increasing their knowledge on best practice and refining their skill-sets. The likelihood of this study effecting change and providing positive outcomes through instructional coaching is attainable through increased awareness of high-quality professional development. Providing optimal support and remaining consistent will enhance the teachers overall success of teachers.

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APPENDICIES

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

Written and Audio Interview Consent Forms

SURVEY INSTRUCTION

Research Project Title: Perceptions of Early Head Start Teachers and Instructional Coaching Practices

Researcher (s): Crystal Webster

A. Purpose of this research: To research the perceptions of Early Head Start teachers with coaching practices in their classroom.

B. Procedures/treatments involved: Primary researcher will conduct In-Depth interviews with each participant with a 13 Item Questionnaire.

C. Expected length of participation: 45 Minutes

D. Potential benefits: To gain perspective of current coaching practices and to reflect teaching skill-sets

E. Potential risks or discomforts: none

F. Medical/mental health contact information (if required): none

G. Contact information for researchers: Crystal Webster Email: cwebster8@uco.edu; LaDonna Atkins Email:latkins@uco.edu (Faculty Member).

H. Contact information for UCO IRB: Pam Lumen 974-5497, irb@uco.edu

I. Explanation of confidentiality and privacy: All interviews and written notes will be secured by passcode and under lock and key for confidentiality purposes. Confidentiality and privacy will be honored and respected to the fullest extent.

J. Assurance of voluntary participation: If at any time you would like to stop or opt out of research study, the primary researcher will immediately discontinue any type of research processes with the participant.

AFFIRMATION BY RESEARCH SUBJECT

I hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the above listed research project and further understand the above listed explanations and descriptions of the research project. I also understand that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years old. I have read and fully understand this Informed Consent Form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I acknowledge that a copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me to keep.



TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

- I consent, begin the study
- I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

Informed Consent

This study will also use audio recording during the in-depth interview process. Do you consent to the use of audio recording?

SIGN HERE

clear

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

APPENDIX B:

INSTITUTION REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



July 10, 2018

IRB Application #: 2018-077

Proposal Title: Perceptions of Early Head Start Teachers and Instructional Coaching Practices.

Type of Review: Initial Review-Expedited

Investigator(s):

Crystal Webster
LaDonna Atkins, Ed.D.

Dear Ms. Webster and Dr. Atkins:

Re: Application for IRB Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

We have received your materials for your application. The UCO IRB has determined that the above named application is APPROVED BY EXPEDITED REVIEW. The Board has provided expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110, for research involving no more than minimal risk and research.

Date of Approval: July 10, 2018
Date of Approval Expiration: July 09, 2019

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. A stamped, approved copy of the informed consent form will be made available to you. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used, where applicable. While this project is approved for the period noted above, any modification to the procedures and/or consent form must be approved prior to incorporation into the study.

It is the responsibility of the investigators to promptly report to the IRB any serious or unexpected adverse events or unanticipated problems that may be a risk to the subjects.

Please let us know if the IRB or Office of Research Integrity and Compliance can be of any further assistance to your research efforts. Never hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'MPowers'.

Melissa Powers, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
University of Central Oklahoma
100 N. University Dr.
Edmond, OK 73034
405-974-5497
irb@uco.edu

Office of Research Integrity and Compliance
100 North University Drive / Edmond, OK 73034
Phone (405) 974-5497 Fax (405) 974-3818

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Research topic: Examining the viewpoints of Early Head Start (EHS) teachers on instructional coaching with Infants and Toddlers.

Time: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Teacher: _____

Demographic Data

1. What type of certification or degree do you hold?
2. What length of time have you taught in early childhood settings?
3. How long have you been in a coaching environment?
4. Have you had a consistent coach during your teaching experience within this facility? If so, how long?

Reflective Coaching Questions

1. During the reflective coaching sessions, what occurs with the Instructional Coach (IC) and the teacher (yourself)?
2. What type of discussions happen during reflective sessions?
3. Have you learned about any additional teaching opportunities? If so, which ones?
4. Outside of instructional coaching, list additional ways you learn teaching methods.
5. Has coaching shaped your teaching style? How so?

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

6. Has your viewpoint on early childhood best practices changed since coaching? How so?
7. Do you have reflective feedback during and/or after your coaching session? If so, share your reflective experience.
8. Are there some ways coaching techniques could be enhanced within the center? If so, what suggestions would you give?
9. In your opinion, are there good qualities of an Instructional Coach? Would you please explain, if so?
10. Are there benefits teachers receive from instructional coaching? If so, please share your thoughts.
11. Do you find any elements in instructional coaching not as beneficial? If so, please elaborate.
12. In your opinion, which coaching method (Shadow, Modeling, Demonstration) do you prefer and why?
13. As a teacher, how can an Instructional Coach support your teaching efforts while in a Coach/Teacher partnership?