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BEHIND THE SCENES: INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES' PERCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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by

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

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Supervising Professor: Dr. Ericka Roland

Since the 20th century, instructional coaching has influenced curricular and pedagogical practices that impact student achievement in K-12 schools; however, the existing literature provides minimal evidence of their experiences in curriculum leadership development. To fill the research gap, this study explores instructional coaches' perceptions of their professional learning related to curriculum development and leadership. The research questions included (1) How do ICs perceive professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership? and (2) How do instructional coaches describe the development of their curriculum coaching knowledge and practices? Upon applying the conceptual framework, which included the Saylor et al. (1981) curriculum development model and the Buysse et al. (2009) professional development model, three findings emerged: learning curriculum leadership in fragments, learning curriculum leadership outside the district, and learning within a community. By highlighting ICs' experiences in curriculum leadership development, this study advances the scholarship on K-12 educational practices in professional learning while providing policy recommendations for improvements.

Acknowledgments

Upon reflecting on my dissertation journey, I realized that many individuals played a role in the success of this study. From my parents to my dissertation chair and committee, I am most thankful for your relentless support. I acknowledge that I would only be a successful doctoral candidate, graduate, and scholar with you.

To my mother, Cat Garner, thank you for investing in my final semester of graduate school. Because of you, I had the resources to finish pursuing a degree that will propel me into my next dimension. Although Grandma passed while I finished chapter 2, we never gave up. Thank you for being my first teacher, cheerleader, and best friend. Your encouragement inspired me to do my best throughout the completion of this dissertation.

To my father, Lloyd Garner, thank you for investing in my professional and personal pursuits. Because of your support, my education was expedited after high school, completing my Ph.D. by the age of 29. Furthermore, I appreciate your sacrifice of time and energy when maintaining my home. Many days, you came to cut my grass, water my foundation, and make repairs around my house - none of which I could complete due to the demands of this dissertation. Thank you for being a remarkable father during this challenging time.

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a level of success that I aspire to obtain. I look forward to telling you about the publication of this work, which will positively impact the world of K-12 education.

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Dedication

"I returned, and I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor also riches to men of understanding, neither yet favor to men of knowledge: but time and chance cometh to them all." - Ecclesiastes 9:11

This dissertation is dedicated to young professionals, such as myself, who aspire to make a difference in education, especially those who serve in curriculum and instruction roles for K-12 districts. Many days, we are flustered with the work and feel helpless by the magnitude of problems that persist across classrooms. I hope that my dissertation will encourage you to take action. Completing this research provided me with solutions to improve the conditions of professional learning for staff who stand between teachers and principals: instructional coaches. Despite their ever-changing assignments, these individuals make a difference in supporting systemic changes that impact teaching and learning, which is why the world needs this research. Day after day, I worked eight-hour shifts from the central office to classrooms across my campus. Night after night, I typed content for each chapter that was subject to a series of revisions. All this to say - it can be done. You can change the game as a practitioner and a scholar if you target the problem, study the literature, and work relentlessly to fulfill the requirements of your degree or dissertation.

In addition, this dissertation is dedicated to the future Dr. Cora Christine Garner. While this culminating project was the most difficult academic endeavor of my graduate journey, it represents the grit, determination, and passion that is mandatory for the next level. This will not be the last time I work until 2 am, receive critical feedback, or sacrifice my time, effort, and energy to positively impact the lives of educators who serve students. I will rest if I must. I will do it afraid if necessary. But, it, my divine assignment, must be done by any means necessary.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within every school is a community of individuals who contribute to student success. Like a film crew, there are producers, cast members, and directors. From the administrative angle, principals act as producers who oversee student safety, campus operations, and staff development. From the instructional viewpoint, teachers star as cast members who bring student learning to life through pedagogical pieces. Standing between principals and teachers are instructional coaches (ICs) who operate as directors of teaching and learning at the campus level. These coaches are school leaders who guide campus improvement through curriculum design and implementation, collaborative planning, and data analysis (Knight, 2007; Spaulding & Smith, 2012; Woulfin et al., 2023). Each day on the set, teachers are immersed in job-embedded coaching and professional learning by ICs to enhance academic production. On the contrary, coaches are limited in their professional development (PD) of the curriculum, which impacts their performance.

Background

In the previous three centuries, school curricula have evolved to accommodate the progressive needs of students (McBrien & Brandt, 1997; Saltman, 2018). As reflected in the times, the curriculum of the 19th century was created to advance students' labor skills to work on farms and mills throughout the country (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In essence, learning was linked to the promotion of manufacturing systems. Despite the Industrial Revolution's success, educational reform leaders sought to switch the curriculum from technical training to liberal learning, which stressed literacy, mathematics, foreign languages, and geography (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Put differently, new curricula encouraged students' knowledge and acquisition of

academic subjects. This led to enacting a standardized curriculum specific to contents and grade levels (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Saltman, 2018). Thus, instructors were required to follow guidelines authorized by the local, state, and national policymakers. Amid these changes, minimal support was provided to teachers, who eventually gathered in teams to support one another in learning and teaching the curriculum (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Saltman, 2018).

By the 1980s, peer coaching was utilized among teachers in K-12 schools. Coined by Joyce and Showers (1996), this phrase indicated a cycle of observation, feedback, and planning sessions between instructors. During this time, they created curricular materials, exchanged pedagogical strategies, and developed lesson objectives (Joyce & Showers, 1996). This peer coaching process empowered teachers to intentionally group themselves to improve the quality of instruction and student outcomes. Although this practice was rooted in feedback, Joyce and Showers (1996) noted that teachers were not evaluative during the sessions. Instead, participants engaged in professional learning that increased their cohesion as a team. With curriculum and instruction as the focal point, peer coaching exemplified the practice of professional learning and cultivated organizational change (Joyce & Showers, 1996). Thus, professional development (PD) became more popular and pronounced in K-12 schools and legislation.

By the late 1990s, federal policies endorsed teacher coaching and professional learning as strategies to build teacher capacity and student achievement. For instance, the Educational Excellence for All Children Act (1999), the successor of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of (1965), specified the need for coaching and professional learning in K-12 schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). This legislation provided a support system for teachers of all contents and grade levels. Moreover, the policy required training for curriculum, instruction, and assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). This means workshops were

needed to guide instructional staff in comprehending and applying the official state standards to classroom teaching. The necessity for professional learning continued in the language of legislation, but the audience expanded to include additional participants.

Following the Educational Excellence for All Children Act (1999), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) emphasized the need for professional learning among all staff and stakeholders. In particular, teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and district personnel were specified as candidates for training (Johnson, 2016). Put differently, the policy included different players to leverage the audience of targeted professional learning. Like the previous legislation, NCLB also stressed the importance of training for curriculum implementation, instructional strategies, and pedagogical skills (Johnson, 2016). Today, professional learning remains relevant through the campus IC, a role specified by the current education law for K-12 schools.

Existing federal legislation has expounded on using ICs as school leaders to support teachers at the campus level. Namely, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), the successor to NCLB, advised the hiring of coaches to guide teachers in lesson planning, assessment creation, and data analysis (Galey, 2016). Simply put, principals were encouraged to utilize ICs to improve pedagogical practices and increase student achievement. In addition, ESSA advised local districts to create professional learning opportunities for coaches on teacher performance and, immediate feedback and informed decision-making at the campus level (Galey, 2016). Consequently, policymakers acknowledged that ICs need training to increase their leadership capacity. While ESSA specified the coach's training for pedagogical tasks, it excluded expectations for their development in curriculum leadership.

Ultimately, the background of this study demonstrates how coaching influenced professional learning for school staff to increase student achievement. Nonetheless, ICs are

seldom prepared for curriculum leadership compared to classroom pedagogy. Considering that some federal initiatives, such as Race to the Top (2012), incentivized student achievement through national standards like Common Core, targeted IC training is critical to support teachers in the curriculum. If this remains unaddressed in practice and policy, the problem of comprehensive coach development will persist throughout K-12 school districts.

Statement of the Problem

The problem this study addressed is that ICs often have minimal professional learning in curriculum leadership, which limits their coaching knowledge and practices (Galey-Horn, 2020; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Polikoff et al., 2020). In K-12 schools nationwide, coaches are recognized as leaders specializing in job-embedded PD for teacher support in curriculum and instruction (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Knight, 2007; Woulfin et al., 2023). Although they are called curricular experts, their training mainly comprises pedagogical strategies to improve classroom practices (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Walkowiak, 2016). As a result, ICs need exposure to professional learning that develops their skills in curriculum leadership, which impacts the quality of teaching and learning throughout the campus (Hairon et al., 2016; Ratnam-Lim, 2016). As instruction becomes more progressive, there is an urgency for coaches to make the necessary connections between the academic curriculum and classroom pedagogy. If ICs lack these skills, they will not have the competency to effectively lead teachers in job-embedded PD and professional learning communities (PLCs). Consequently, their support will remain one-dimensional with risks for low teacher growth and student achievement. Without understanding coaches' professional learning needs, district and campus administrators will continue providing training with minimal connection to the curriculum. Consequently, ICs will

not comprehend the critical components, such as learning objectives, design, implementation, and evaluation, that influence high-quality instruction and impact student outcomes.

Furthermore, if coaches were privy to professional learning for curriculum leadership, specific questions remained a mystery. For example, who was responsible for the delivery of ICs' training? Moreover, what content was emphasized to prepare coaches for curriculum leadership? Finally, how were ICs engaged during their professional learning? Collectively, I argue that practitioners and scholars of K-12 education must understand coaches' experiences in curriculum leadership development because it can potentially cultivate systemic improvements across school districts (Knight, 2007; Woulfin et al., 2023). This stance shaped the purpose of my research and resulted in the narrowing of two research questions that guided the study.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore instructional coaches' perceptions of their professional learning related to curriculum development and leadership. In doing so, this study provided insight to district and campus leaders on how ICs encounter, interpret, and apply curricular training to their coaching roles. Findings from this study leveraged the literature that currently captures the perspectives of instructors and administrators, with little reflection from ICs responsible for supporting teachers in applying the curriculum. The following research questions guided my study:

1. How do ICs perceive professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership?
2. How do instructional coaches describe the development of their curriculum coaching knowledge and practices?

Significance of the Study

ICs are pertinent to the organizational structure and outcomes of K-12 schools (Miller et al., 2019; Woulfin & Rigby, 2017), so this study is significant as it brought awareness to coaches' experiences in training for curriculum leadership development. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on ICs' capacity to learn pedagogical practices (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018), this research is relevant to the existing literature on coaching because it clarified who delivered ICs' training, what they learned, and how they were immersed in their development of knowledge and practices for curriculum leadership.

Uniquely, this study adds to the literature on coaches' training in curriculum leadership. In particular, this research provided awareness of how coaches develop specific knowledge and practices for curricular tasks, such as designing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum used at the campus level. Hence, the study's significance illuminated a phenomenon occurring among campus coaches. While their stories are often unknown, this study expanded the literature to capture their perspectives on a topic outside of pedagogy. Moreover, the findings and recommendations contributed to the existing scholarship for curriculum leadership and PD in K-12 public education. Such context includes studies on different types of school leaders and their experiences supporting primary and secondary student outcomes. Ultimately, this study was noteworthy in spotlighting the voices of key players, like ICs, and narrowing the research gap.

In addition to closing the literature gap, this study improves practice and policy recommendations for K-12 schools—namely, the actions of district administrators, campus principals, and state legislators. Primarily, findings from the research are helpful to district administrators in creating professional learning for ICs that includes comprehensive curriculum leadership development. Next, the results were helpful to campus principals who support coaches through extended training opportunities and resources that build their curricular knowledge and

practices. Likewise, this study was noteworthy for legislators who craft educational policies that benefit the professional growth of ICs, as the current federal law, Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), only outlines coaches' responsibilities in supporting teachers with pedagogical strategies. Finally, the findings are helpful for regional service centers that have the personnel and resources to support IC's curriculum leadership development.

Researcher Positionality

This study emerged from my experiences as an instructional facilitator and educator. In my current administrative role, I oversee the curricular resources for teachers and students for a K-12 school district; however, I must collaborate with campus ICs daily. This position impacted how I came to the study in two ways. First, as an instructional facilitator, I am primarily mindful of the professional learning offered to coaches. Moreover, I have facilitated professional learning for ICs on curriculum, pedagogy, and engagement. Second, as an educator, I recognized the importance of receiving support from the campus coach. As a classroom teacher, I had the privilege of learning from my IC. However, most support was grounded in pedagogical practices with minimal curriculum analysis. As a result, I was uncomfortable utilizing the state standards and unfamiliar with district curricular resources. Collectively, these experiences contributed to my interest in researching the phenomenon of professional learning from the perspectives of coaches.

The importance of studying this topic stemmed from my viewpoint that ICs should act as curriculum leaders. At the district level, I was taught that coaches are responsible for guiding teachers in the academic content while providing ongoing classroom support. Put differently, ICs are responsible for understanding the state standards and utilizing the district curricular resources for classroom lessons. Despite this, I have observed the disconnect between coaches'

expectations and their access to professional learning. Below are the assumptions I brought to this study that influenced my research:

1. Professional learning for coaches is limited and primarily based on pedagogical practices to increase student discourse and engagement.
2. ICs must understand how to deconstruct the curriculum to support teachers in academic content.
3. Coaches need more training to utilize curricular resources.
4. ICs must be included in curriculum leadership opportunities at the district level, as they are expected to manage curricular initiatives at the campus level.
5. Coaches can improve their craft with ongoing access to professional learning in curriculum leadership development.

The combination of my positionality and assumptions initiated the search for a conceptual framework, which operated as the foundation of my study in comprehending coaches' curriculum leadership development.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study consists of two different models: the Curriculum Development Model (Saylor et al., 1981) and the Professional Development (PD) Model (Buysse et al., 2009). Components within the framework operate as a lens to understand the phenomenon shared among ICs. The Curriculum Development Model (Saylor et al., 1981) primarily includes aspects of curriculum leadership from an administrative viewpoint. Utilizing this framework was a tool for comprehending the tasks ICs may experience during curriculum leadership development. Lastly, the Professional Development (PD) Model (Buysse et al., 2009) portrayed vital aspects of professional learning, such as the who, what, and how of educational

training. Applying this framework allowed me to understand the PD structure and how coaches experience professional learning. The following sections provide additional details for both models and make connections to the purpose of the study.

Curriculum Development Model

To understand the elements of curriculum leadership, the Saylor et al. (1981) curriculum development model served as the first conceptual framework for this study. Using an administrative approach, Saylor et al. (1981) capture the curriculum development cycle from a school leadership lens. Specifically, the components include goals and objectives, curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation (Lunenburg, 2011). Although the model represents a procedural version of curriculum leadership, Saylor et al. (1981) acknowledge the foundation, forces, and feedback that impact curricular decisions in K-12 education. The following paragraphs expound on the framework's features and how it applies to ICs who operate as school leaders when managing curriculum components.

Saylor et al. (1981) commenced their model with goals and objectives. According to Noddings (2007), goals are quantifiable outcomes for students in a specific subject and grade level. Similarly, objectives are measurable statements defining student expectations and strategies (Noddings, 2007). In simple terms, goals and objectives reflect the local, state, or national standards. Within the model, Saylor et al. (1981) convey this by illustrating the influence of external forces. This includes federal legislation, regional requirements, professional organizations, and scholarly research (Saylor et al., 1981). Hence, ICs must adhere to the recommended policies and best practices as school leaders before crafting goals and objectives for classroom lessons. Alongside external forces, Saylor et al. (1981) recognized society, learners, and knowledge as the main characteristics of the curriculum. The beginning of the

model provides an understanding of the factors coaches learn when customizing educational experiences that align with the curriculum design for various subjects and grade levels.

Listed second in the model is curriculum design. This is structuring information centered on the subject, student, or society (Zama & Endeley, 2021). In other words, school leaders, such as ICs, create a scope and sequence for academic content that aligns with the established goals and objectives. Likewise, Saylor et al. (1981) use curriculum design as a domain to represent the creation of student learning experiences. This helped to examine how ICs are taught to develop lessons, activities, and assessments according to the target audience. Moreover, the design is tailored to a theme within an academic subject like math, reading, social studies, and science (Lunenburg, 2011). This phase of the model reveals how coaches attain skills in organizing a lesson cycle that applies to instructional staff throughout the organization, which is critical for a successful implementation.

Curriculum implementation is second to last in the development model (Saylor et al., 1981). Recent studies confirm this occurrence at the campus level with guidance from ICs who operate as school leaders (Govindasamy & Mestry, 2022; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). To rephrase, coaches are needed to support teachers in applying the curriculum across the campus. Saylor et al. (1981) include this step in the framework because it involves strategic planning and decision-making at the administrative level. Including this domain clarified how coaches become competent in creating timelines to accomplish and execute curricular initiatives across the campus. Utilizing this section of the curriculum development model was critical to comprehending how ICs gain the knowledge, skills, and resources needed for a successful execution and assessment of the curriculum.

The final component of the model is curriculum evaluation. According to Zama and Endeley (2021), this is the technique of gathering and interpreting data to determine whether or not students mastered learning objectives. This is a critical step for coaches because it reveals the value of the curriculum and its development process. Saylor et al. (1981) conclude the framework with this because it signals the review and revision of previously mentioned domains. Curriculum evaluation is based on assessment data and indicates feedback from stakeholders, such as teachers, students, and parents. Applying this component of the model was necessary to understand how ICs collaborate with other key players when analyzing academic outcomes and discussing future actions for the curriculum.

In most schools, this stage occurs by the end of the school year when planning for a new student cohort or population (Lunenburg, 2011). Thus, using this model to discern how ICs adjust the curriculum development process as school leaders who improve pedagogy and encourage student achievement was imperative.

Within the K-12 educational context, the Saylor et al. (1981) curriculum development model was a tool for understanding how ICs experience curricular tasks as school leaders. Specifically, the knowledge and skills coaches need to lead curricular goals and objectives, design, implementation, and evaluation in their daily practices. In this study, I used this conceptual framework to guide the data collection and analysis process in understanding how ICs perceive their professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership development. Applying this model allowed me to comprehend the way coaches learn curriculum leadership.

Professional Development (PD) Model

To understand the structure of professional development (PD), the professional development model of Buysse et al. (2009) served as the second conceptual framework for this

study. In particular, the critical aspects of the model include the who, what, and how of PD (Buysse et al., 2009). In addition, the researchers acknowledge elements that impact opportunities for professional learning, such as organizational structures, access, outreach, evaluation, resources, and policies (Romijn et al., 2021). The following paragraphs elaborate on the framework's features and their application to my study involving campus ICs who experience PD.

The Buysse et al. (2009) model starts by acknowledging who attends PD. In this case, emphasis is placed on adult learners who operate as practitioners and professionals in K-12 education (Buysse et al., 2009). Moreover, the researchers acknowledge that participants are diverse in their certifications, positions, and experiences (Buysse et al., 2009). Put differently, PD attracts people of different characteristics and contexts for professional learning and growth. When applied to my research, campus ICs are the sole participants of PD for the researched phenomenon; however, their motivations for engaging in professional learning are diverse. While some coaches are required to attend district professional learning (Calo et al., 2014; Galey-Horn, 2020).), others seek additional opportunities to supplement their curricular knowledge and practices (Bean et al., 2015; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin, 2018). Nonetheless, their experiences needed a deeper exploration to understand the phenomenon of curriculum leadership development. Further, this discovery provided a pathway for understanding the information they obtained during their professional learning.

Next, the PD model addressed what participants learn during PD (Buysse et al., 2009). In particular, the researchers used this component to examine knowledge, skills, and beliefs taught during PD (Buysse et al., 2009). Concerning my study, this referred to the content learned for curriculum leadership development. In addition, it led me to understand the craft and mindset

required for curriculum coaching. Researchers of the model expound on the PD content by noting the opportunity for applied practice (Buysse et al., 2009). Thus, I comprehended if their experiences included practice scenarios for applying curriculum leadership within the school context. Ultimately, understanding what coaches learned during professional learning for curriculum leadership revealed how they learned it.

The final major component of the model consists of how participants learn during PD (Buysse et al., 2009). Namely, this includes delivering and facilitating learning experiences for those in attendance (Buysse et al., 2009). Romijn et al. (2021) concluded that training modes often incorporate workshops, simulated practice, curriculum plans, coursework, and online resources. Thus, this section of the model permitted me to make meaning of the approach used for most coach training on curriculum leadership. In addition, researchers of the model claimed that the approach to PD is aligned with the tools used by practitioners and professionals of K-12 education (Buysse et al., 2009). When applied to my study, such materials included the learning objectives, academic standards, and curricular resources that coaches use for job-embedded PD and professional learning community (PLC) meetings. This provided a lens to understand the approach and tools used when ICs experienced curriculum leadership training, which was impacted by multiple contextual factors.

Within the broader context of the framework, several elements affected the design of professional learning experiences for ICs. In particular, professional learning was influenced by policies, organizational structures, evaluation, outreach efforts, resources, and access (Buysse et al., 2009; Romijn et al., 2021). At the federal level, current educational policies, such as ESSA (2015), shaped professional learning requirements for ICs responsible for campus curriculum and instruction (Galey, 2016). Likewise, states have published and promoted an official curriculum,

which coaches need training on as school leaders (McBrien & Brandt, 1997). At the district level, organizational structures have influenced the evaluation of ICs that determine their professional learning experiences (Galey-Horn & Woulfin, 2021; Woulfin, 2023). Lastly, outreach efforts, resources, and access to training at the campus level have contributed to their effectiveness in coaching and their ability to serve as school leaders (Knight, 2007; Spaulding & Smith, 2012). For this research, I remained aware of these elements, as they affected coaches' experiences in curriculum leadership development.

Applying the Framework

Both the Saylor et al. (1981) curriculum development model and the Buysse et al. (2009) professional development model worked together as the conceptual framework for this study (Figure 1). Specifically, the Saylor et al. (1981) model provided the domains of curriculum development experienced by school leaders, such as ICs. On the other hand, the Buysse et al. (2009) model uncovered elements of professional learning for educational contexts. Merging both models yielded comprehension of the components that impacted coaches' training for curriculum leadership—namely, the who, what, and how that coexisted to create the phenomenon experienced by ICs. I applied the conceptual framework in this study to analyze interview data, inform coding cycles, and make meaning of the findings. These actions were critical to align the framework with the purpose of the study and research questions.

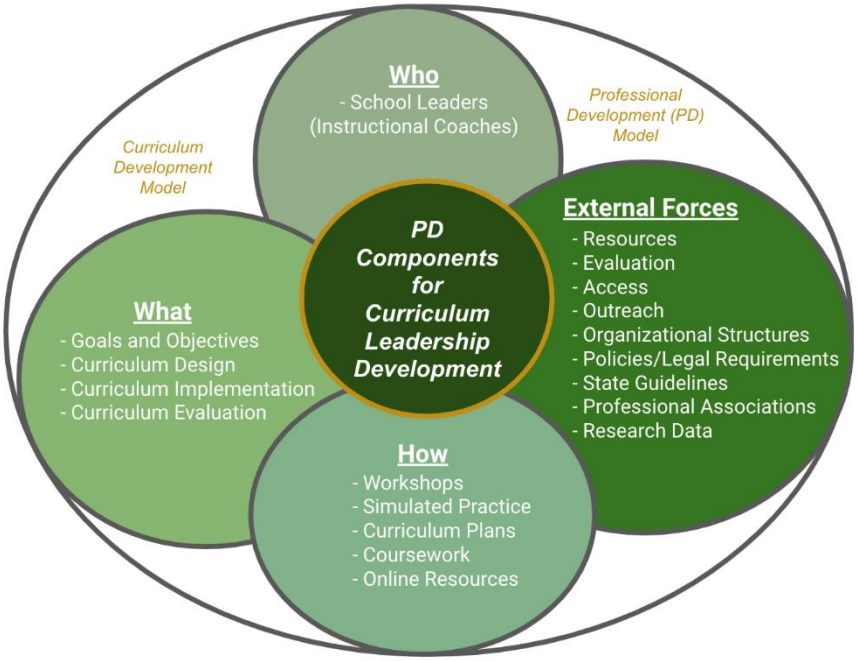

Figure 1 *Conceptual Framework*

Definition of Terms

Curriculum

Curriculum refers to the outline of student expectations for academic subjects, such as reading, math, science, and social studies (McBrien & Brandt, 1997). To promote student achievement, the curriculum is paired with resources that align with learning objectives (Glatthorn, 2019).

Curriculum Leadership

Curriculum leadership refers to the supervision of decisions and practices that align with the school district's curriculum (Hairon, 2017). Tasks include implementing the curriculum, evaluating resources, and involving community members to cultivate support for curricular initiatives (Wiles, 2008).

Curriculum Leadership Development

Curriculum Leadership Development refers to learning how the curriculum is developed, implemented, experienced, and evaluated among stakeholders within a school district. Leaders participating in this training enhance their knowledge of the design, implementation, and evaluation of the state curriculum or curricular resources utilized at the campus and district levels (Mullen, 2007; Saylor et al.,1981).

Curricular Tasks

Curricular tasks indicate the responsibilities that ICs execute when engaging in curriculum design, implementation, or evaluation at the district or campus level. For instance, design may signify their duties in creating unit plans. Conversely, implementation could indicate coaches' responsibilities in supporting teachers in applying these plans. Finally, tasks in the evaluation may include assessing the plans' value compared to student achievement.

Instructional Coaching

I*nstructional coaching* is individualized professional learning to support teacher growth and student achievement through job-embedded PD and professional learning communities (PLC). Coaching may include supporting teachers in curricular tasks, pedagogical strategies, goal setting, data analysis, and organizational changes (Woulfin et al., 2023).

Instructional Coach (IC)

Instructional coach (IC) refers to someone who supports teachers, individually or collaboratively, with curriculum and pedagogical practices. The IC helps teachers achieve their professional goals by establishing trust and building relationships during job-embedded PD and PLC (Knight, 2007).

Job-embedded PD

Job-embedded PD is a type of professional learning led daily by instructional coaches (ICs) to support classroom teaching outcomes (Zepeda, 2015). During this time, ICs may apply the curriculum, resources, and goals to support teachers' practices (Islas, 2010).

Professional Learning/ Professional Development (PD)/ Training

Professional learning, or professional development (PD) and training, consists of workshops or courses for staff within or outside the campus setting (Avalos, 2011). During professional learning, facilitators of sessions model effective practices, provide expert support, offer feedback, and assist participants in transferring knowledge into practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

School Leader

School leader refers to someone responsible for teaching and learning outcomes within a K-12 school system (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). School leaders also include instructional coaches (ICs) who serve on the leadership team and facilitate systemic changes in curriculum and pedagogy at the campus level (Knight, 2007; Spaulding & Smith, 2012; Woulfin et al., 2023).

Dissertation Outline

In this chapter, I presented an overview of the study. Chapter two includes a literature review of the instructional coach, curriculum leadership, and teacher PD. In chapter three, I explain the qualitative methodology, data collection, and data analysis approaches. In chapter four, I present the findings of the study. The final chapter discusses the findings and literature with recommendations for future educational research, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Around the world, principals and teachers are recognized for positively impacting student achievement. Among these key figures are instructional coaches (ICs) who impact systemic and organizational changes (Galey-Horn, 2020; Woulfin et al., 2023). While past policies detail their duties of classroom coaching and job-embedded professional development (PD) (Galey, 2016; Johnson, 2016), present studies confirm their ability to facilitate lesson planning with teachers (Hui et al., 2020; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Turner, 2022). What remains limited is the evidence of their curricular responsibilities, such as the development of curriculum units, resources, and professional learning for teachers. Hence, there was a need to understand the scope of coaching beyond the surface of pedagogy. In this literature review, I learned how scholars connected ICs to curriculum leadership in K-12 public schools.

Methods

Alongside the University of Texas at Arlington's (UTA) online library, the EBSCO and JSTOR search engines were utilized to locate content for the following literature review. Search parameters for all three platforms were narrowed to peer-reviewed, scholarly articles that ranged from 2013 to 2023. This ten-year time frame was selected to ensure relevant research, including studies published before, during, and after the Covid-19 pandemic. In specific, search terms included key phrases like "instructional coaching," "curriculum leadership," and "professional development." Entities outside of K-12 public education, such as private, charter, and post-secondary schools, were excluded from my search because they are not mentioned in federal policies related to ICs. Ultimately, 77 peer-reviewed scholarly articles were used to examine scholars' perspectives.

The following sections provide an overview of three major literature strands: the instructional coach, curriculum leadership, and teacher PD. I analyze the IC role, their training, and the support they provide to teachers. Next, I highlight the coaches' curriculum leadership at the district and campus levels. Finally, I examine their involvement with teacher PD, which ranges from campus professional learning to planning communities.

The Instructional Coach

In most public school districts, ICs are hired as the experts for pedagogical improvements inside the classroom (Knight, 2019; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin et al., 2023); however, few studies explore their experience as curriculum leaders (Galey-Horn, 2020; Galey-Horn & Wouflin, 2021; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Pak et al., 2020). Instead, researchers focus on ICs' involvement with pedagogy, with job-embedded professional development (PD) as a top priority (Knight et al., 2018; Lotter et al., 2013; Main & Slater, 2021; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2018). As a result, there is little evidence to understand how coaches interpret their curricular responsibilities. Below, I discuss three major components: the role of the IC, their professional learning, and how they train teachers. I analyze findings from the existing literature while naming limitations that contribute to the research gap.

Instructional Coach (IC) Role

Unlike any other school role, ICs have a variety of responsibilities that coexist with their primary responsibility of classroom coaching. Across the literature, there is evidence that coaches are crossed between teachers and administrators (Galey-Horn, 2020; Horn & Woulfin, 2021; Miller et al., 2019; Walkowiak, 2016; Woulfin, 2023). The main findings include the coaches' efforts to build relationships and foster collaborative planning. For example, Walkowiak (2016) discovered that coaches prioritize their bond with teachers because it

increases buy-in toward systemic and organizational changes. Remarkably, coaches spend a plethora of time pursuing instructors as trustworthy colleagues to increase compliance on campus. Walkowiak (2016) also found that ICs partner with teachers to provide feedback on lesson plans rather than recreating or rejecting the content. Put differently, coaches are intentional about critiquing teachers' approach to pedagogy but have no commentary toward their connection to the curriculum. Similar trends were seen in other aspects of coaching, such as their ability to critically analyze assessment data.

ICs examine student test scores, in addition to building relationships and cultivating collaborative planning among teachers. To this extent, scholars contend that the analysis of assessment data contributes to their decision-making (Huguet et al., 2014; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Piper, 2018; Walkowiak, 2016). In a study by Huguet et al. (2014), the coaches were adept at utilizing a data management system that organizes and illustrates students' scores and provides implications based on item and standards analysis. In other words, ICs track the results of performance outcomes in correlation with state standards that detail student expectations. Nevertheless, the researchers noted that coaches do not model for teachers how to deconstruct their classroom scores (Huguet et al., 2014). By not doing so, the instructors failed to make their connections from the student data to the curriculum containing the state standards. Despite this, ICs are still leaders at the campus level; however, their influence is mostly pedagogical.

By studying the perspectives of most campus stakeholders, researchers conclude that ICs execute leadership by modeling lessons, providing resources, and facilitating job-embedded professional development (PD) (Bean et al., 2015; Calo et al., 2014; Gettings & Martin, 2022; Knight & Skrtic, 2020). For example, nearly all coaches surveyed in a Calo et al. (2014) study rank themselves as instructional leaders. Moreover, over ninety percent attributed their

leadership to modeling pedagogical practices and distributing materials for extended PD, such as professional learning communities (PLC) (Calo et al., 2014). To rephrase, ICs manage campus expectations for pedagogy through demonstration or discourse from best practices. On the other hand, research shows that less than half of the participants consider themselves supervisors of teachers (Bean et al., 2015; Calo et al., 2014). Unfortunately, the findings rarely mention whether the supervision was specific to curriculum or pedagogy. Either way, evidence from the existing literature confirms that coaches are cognizant of remaining supportive when leading teachers.

Finally, ICs guide instructors with a spirit of advocacy based on the results of previous work. Specifically, scholars have contended that coaches act as stakeholders and liaisons when extending teachers' professional learning opportunities (Hashim, 2020; Kho et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2019; Woulfin, 2023). A study by Kho et al. (2019) noted that ICs are proponents of ongoing access to collaborative co-planning, pedagogical strategies, and simulated activities. Namely, coaches push for extended professional learning opportunities on behalf of teachers. In contrast, there is no evidence of coaches championing curricular initiatives, yet this is an expectation among school leaders. For instance, Gettings and Martin (2022) described how an assistant superintendent believed ICs were most responsible for assisting teachers in comprehending the curriculum. This means coaches should understand how state standards connect with curricular and pedagogical resources. That said, there is a need to understand IC training that is comprehensive to their curriculum leadership tasks. The aforementioned studies analyze coaches and their role in helping teachers in K-12 schools. What remains consistent is that ICs lead teachers in pedagogy; however, the literature lacks evidence of how coaches support teachers in the curriculum. Although they advocate for teachers to attend additional PD, it is apparent that ICs also need training.

Instructional Coach (IC) Professional Learning

Rather than focusing on ICs' curriculum leadership development, most researchers assert that ICs are trained in effective communication (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Walkowiak, 2016). For example, in Mangin and Dunsmore's (2015) study, ICs participated in workshops highlighting different soft skills, such as leading critical conversations and navigating different personality types. Moreover, they received different learning materials to reference during the training, such as articles and books containing research-based strategies (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). This evidence proves that ICs are equipped with communication methods but are not trained to improve their craft. The researchers acknowledged that this was a limitation of the study since they did not connect the PD with the practice of instructional coaching (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Consequently, ICs transfer soft skills, rather than leadership abilities, from PD into their profession. Therefore, additional training is needed within the district to build a culture of support for coaches.

ICs vocalize interest in joining a network of coaches to improve their practice while attending extra workshops. Scholars have argued that these opportunities provide ICs access to further feedback, alongside traditional training (Bean et al., 2015; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin, 2018). For instance, a study by Bean et al. (2015) proclaimed that over ninety percent of coach participants desire peer support in their leadership and coaching capacity. Put differently, they sought to receive and exchange advice from one another as their experiences varied within the organization. The study also highlighted ICs' need for mentorship to express their ideas and concerns about the coaching role (Bean et al., 2015). To paraphrase, coaches want guidance on day-to-day challenges without criticism and within the confines of professional learning. Although the researchers quantified coaches' preference to partner with one another,

they did not survey ICs' interests in attending supplemental PD in curriculum leadership. Nonetheless, coach training for pedagogy remains more prevalent.

When ICs connect within a school district for professional learning, they are often trained on the instructional framework. Research shows that this PD increases coaches' competency in pedagogical practices (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Siler & Kogut, 2019). For example, Marshall and Khalifa (2018) noted that coaches unite at workshops to learn strategies for culturally responsive instruction. This included the replacement of traditional pedagogy and the inclusivity of students' culture. (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). To rephrase, ICs comprehend ways to help teachers connect with their students on a personal and societal level.

Conversely, Marshall and Khalifa (2018) did not specify if coaches use a curriculum during the training. Thus, there was no evidence to confirm they assisted teachers in synthesizing culturally responsive practices with the curriculum across the school district. Outcomes like this suggest a deficit in curricular training for coaches.

Very seldom are ICs trained in curriculum leadership. According to evidence in the available literature, this PD is offered by district administrators, yet the content is not presented from a coaching perspective (Calo et al., 2014; Galey-Horn, 2020). Case in point, the ICs in Galley-Horn's (2020) study noted that leaders from the central office managed their professional learning, which included training on the implementation of the curriculum; however, the facilitators of the session did not explain how coaches could support teachers in learning the content (Galley-Horn, 2020). This means ICs understand the state standards and student expectations of the academic subject but are oblivious to coaching strategies to transfer this knowledge. As a result, Galley-Horn (2020) found that the ICs linked with one another to exchange best practices for connecting the curriculum with pedagogy. Namely, they depended on

their coaching network to fill the gaps in their training. While the curriculum component is valuable to PD, coaches need access to ongoing professional learning to make the necessary connections. If not, they will lack specific skills when training teachers at the campus level.

The training for ICs ranges from surface-level topics, like communication, to broader aspects of curriculum and instruction. Despite the need for PD facilitators to synthesize curricular content and pedagogical practices, most emphasize one or the other. The lack of synthesis creates a misconception, which impacts coaches who are accountable for extending teachers' professional learning in the classroom.

IC and Teacher Training

To extend teachers' professional learning, ICs lead job-embedded PD specific to classroom coaching (Woulfin, 2023). Often called coach-based PD, this on-site training is an exclusive experience between ICs and teachers (Desimone & Pak, 2017; Kotze et al., 2021; Shernoff, 2017). Notably, the teacher participants in Shernoff's (2017) study portrayed the advantages of coach-based PD as an ongoing expansion of their pedagogical toolbox. The findings highlighted how coaches carve out time in their calendars to develop teachers' pedagogical strategies based on the results of classroom visits (Shernoff, 2017). For this reason, ICs intentionally tailor their coach-based PD to the individual needs of teachers and the context of their classrooms. On the other hand, teachers from the study expressed some concern about the coaches' ability to understand the scope of the students and school environment (Shernoff, 2017). Specifically, some ICs did not consider how inevitable factors, like student behavior, poor morale, and leadership changes, impacted classroom instruction. While the researchers acknowledged the benefits and challenges of coach-based PD from teachers' perspectives,

additional research is needed to confirm the consistency of this type of training and if the curriculum is a component.

Coach-based PD is also linked to coaching cycles between ICs and teachers at least once a month (Hui et al., 2020). Scholars have claimed that this sequence includes a pre-conference, classroom visit, and post-conference led by coaches (Hui et al., 2020; Knight et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2019). For example, Hui et al. (2020) found that coaches review teachers' professional goals during the pre-conference, observe instruction during the classroom visit, and provide feedback during the post-conference (Hui et al., 2020). This cyclical process demonstrates that ICs follow a pattern when engaging in job-embedded PD. Although Hui et al. (2020) included the dialogue between coaches and instructors during the post-conference, the commentary was exclusive to the classroom visit and did not encompass curricular or pedagogical strategies. To further explain, the coaches analyzed the instructors' actions yet seldom provided strategies to improve their practice. Studies like this create an inquiry into the depth of dialogue between ICs and teachers, which often emphasizes pedagogical practices over the curriculum.

A critical portion of the previously mentioned cycle is dedicated to coaching conversations. This practice sets the foundation for ICs to enhance teachers' skills in specific strategies, mostly rooted in classroom pedagogy (Morgan et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2015; Walkowiak, 2016). For instance, a quantitative study by Thomas et al. (2015) discovered a positive correlation between coaching conversations and pedagogical techniques in all elementary grade levels. In particular, coaches' discourse focused on lesson modeling, best practices, and classroom routines to improve instruction and increase student engagement (Thomas et al., 2015). In addition, Thomas et al. (2015) named academic content as a topic of coaching conversations; however, the researchers did not specify if ICs utilize the curriculum

during these discussions. This causes uncertainty regarding whether coaches are conveying the expectations outlined by state standards, especially when supporting teachers in the curriculum.

Following coaching conversations, ICs guide teachers into a reflection period based on the provided feedback. Coach-based PD allows time for this recurring aspect of introspection (Huggins et al., 2021; Keijzer et al., 2020; Lotter et al., 2013). A study by Lotter et al. (2013) exemplified the significance of this practice by describing how teachers reflect on their instruction and make immediate revisions to their lesson plans according to the feedback they receive from coaches. Though Lotter et al. (2013) noted that ICs provided teachers with observational data, the researchers did not mention if teachers were encouraged to refer to the curriculum. Consequently, no evidence exists to confirm if teachers' reflections captured their understanding of the academic content. Further, it is questionable if they applied any curricular resources to their revised lessons. This is a missed opportunity for teachers and ICs, who are accountable for curriculum leadership at the campus level.

This section clarified the role of coaches, their professional learning experiences, and how they facilitate coach-based PD to train teachers. Each finding illuminated the ICs' capacity to lead teachers in pedagogy, yet there was little to no acknowledgment of how they learned or incorporated the curriculum during their coaching. Therefore, it was evident to research how ICs are granted access to curriculum leadership opportunities from the district to the campus levels.

Curriculum Leadership

Curriculum leadership in K-12 education remains prevalent at the district and campus levels. While district administrators, principals, and teachers are featured throughout studies on curriculum development and implementation (Clay & Broege, 2022; Tapala et al., 2021; Xia et al., 2019), there is little evidence of ICs' involvement (Galey-Horn & Wouflin, 2021; Polikoff et

al., 2020). In the following section, I explain the scope of district curriculum leadership, which starts with the efforts of administrators and ends with the consideration of coaches. Finally, I analyze the extent of campus curriculum leadership that illuminates the responsibilities of principals who eventually delegate curricular tasks to ICs.

District Curriculum Leadership

Researchers have confirmed that various stakeholders play a role in district curriculum leadership (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Polikoff et al., 2020); however, most studies have spotlighted the efforts of district administrators (Stornaiuolo et al., 2023; Sullanmaa, 2018; Xia et al., 2019). For example, in a quantitative study by Xia et al. (2019), the researchers determined that district administrators control the curriculum utilized in K-12 schools. Specifically, the results indicated a significant correlation between district leaders and aspects of curriculum development, such as establishing curricular resources, policies, and objectives (Xia et al., 2019). This finding suggests that district administrators set the expectations for curriculum leadership before involving campus stakeholders. Similar results were discovered by Stornaiuolo et al. (2023), which confirmed the district administrators' creation of pacing guides, PD policies, and curricular materials. This trend across school districts suggests that ICs have minimal influence in producing curricula at the district level. Further, the literature does not specify if coaches receive the chance to examine the curriculum and ensure alignment with the academic needs of their campus. Instead, this opportunity is often given to teachers.

Previous studies have shown district administrators to collaborate with instructors for curricular initiatives (Pak et al., 2020; Pietarinen et al., 2019). Multiple scholars have proved that district leaders partner with teachers to create campus curricula (Bessong & Ogina, 2022; Clay & Broege, 2022; Tapala et al., 2021). This was demonstrated in a study by Clay and Broege (2022)

that explained how one superintendent worked with a teacher leader to implement a new curriculum. Together, they crafted multi-subject units that included learning objectives and materials (Clay & Broege, 2022). The district administrator entrusted this teacher and excluded expertise from the campus IC.

Likewise, the teachers described in a study by Tapala et al. (2021) were appointed to lead and supervise a new curriculum in their school district, emphasizing academic manipulatives and materials. While coaches awaited similar opportunities on the sideline, teachers were identified as key players. Consequently, cutting ICs out of this stage results in missed opportunities for their knowledge, awareness, and practice in applying the curriculum to their coaching role. Further, this creates a misalignment between the expectations of teachers and coaches. While one is expected to utilize the curriculum, the other is expected to provide coaching support around curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation. Despite this, ICs are seldom asked to support curriculum initiatives, most occurring outside campus.

When ICs are considered for leadership opportunities at the district level, it is often concerned with curriculum changes in reading and mathematics - two subjects that remain prevalent in state assessments nationwide (Anselmo et al., 2021; Erbeli et al., 2020). Although the research is narrow, a few studies exemplify how coaches contribute to developing these curricula (Galey-Horn & Wouflin, 2021; Galey-Horn, 2020; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). For example, Horn and Wouflin's (2021) qualitative study detailed how coaches created a new literacy curriculum and piloted a numeracy program for a K-12 school district (Galey-Horn & Wouflin, 2021). Further, they collaborated with various stakeholders to publish policies for school leaders and teachers (Galey-Horn & Wouflin, 2021). As evidenced by the study, coaches were instrumental in establishing the expectations for curriculum usage among teachers and

students. Nevertheless, the study did not mention if coaches were considered for additional opportunities. Thus, there is minimal evidence of their involvement with curriculum development and textbook adoption at the district level.

Alongside curricular design, some ICs are invited to textbook adoption meetings within school districts (Piper, 2018; Shinno & Mizoguchi, 2021). Some scholars have claimed that coaches are invited to participate contingent on the academic subjects they support at their campuses (Galey, 2016; Polikoff et al., 2020). For instance, Polikoff et al. (2020) analyzed coaches' involvement in an adoption committee for a new mathematics resource. Specifically, the researchers described how the coaches utilized a rubric to evaluate the quality and relevancy of various textbooks (Polikoff et al., 2020). Expressly, the voices of ICs are captured when determining the most suitable curriculum for a school district. Furthermore, Galey (2016) claimed that ICs served on textbook committees and helped coordinate curriculum adoption meetings. Therefore, when given the opportunity, coaches can lead curricular tasks alongside various leaders, including district and campus administrators.

Previous studies convey how ICs are not at the forefront of curriculum leadership at the district level. Quite the opposite, there is little mention of their involvement in curriculum development, implementation, and adoption. The evidence illustrating how coaches transfer these skills into the classroom to support teachers remains limited in the existing literature. The additional analysis examines how coaches' curricular tasks are captured at the campus level.

Campus Curriculum Leadership

Similar to the school district, campus curriculum leadership is also led by administrators, particularly principals (Hairon et al., 2017). Findings from studies have revealed that they oversee, evaluate, and create systems to support curriculum implementation within classrooms

(Chan et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2016). For example, Chan et al. (2022) found that principals conducted teacher observations to ensure the curriculum was applied during classroom instruction. In addition, the administrators provided evaluative feedback on the curriculum derived from student outcomes, such as test scores (Chan et al., 2022). This evidence indicates that principals play a critical part in the vitality of a curriculum that is utilized among teachers. Moreover, principals apply distributive leadership when delegating curricular tasks to campus committees; however, these groups include several stakeholders except ICs: teachers, parents, and representatives from the community (Wilson et al., 2016). Based on these findings, one can assume that principals, rather than coaches, also manage teachers' professional learning experiences connected to the curriculum.

Some principals lead on-campus PD as an extension of their curriculum leadership (Ratnam-Lim, 2017). Scholars have asserted that these workshops are rooted in the curricular resource and targeted solely to teachers (Kimura et al., 2022; Shilon & Schechter, 2017; Tahir et al., 2023). For instance, Kimura et al. (2022) highlighted how the campus principal cultivated professional learning opportunities for a new anti-bias curriculum. Specifically, this administrator displayed videos, facilitated book studies, and engaged in role-playing to help teachers grasp the content (Kimura et al., 2022). Meanwhile, a principal from Shilon and Schechter's (2017) study contracted a curriculum expert to host PD for her teachers. Despite this, the teachers failed to understand the curricular framework (Shilon & Schechter, 2017). Results like this insinuate the need for collaboration between principals and other school leaders. To effectively support teachers in learning and utilizing the curriculum, principals must consider leveraging their leadership by including the campus coach.

Since student achievement is a paramount priority for principals, some apply distributive leadership to delegate curricular tasks to other leadership team members (Bush & Ng, 2019). Scholars of recent literature have illustrated the complexity of these tasks, which still require support from campus administrators (Govindasamy & Mestry, 2022; Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021; Sam & Caliendo, 2018; Tapala et al., 2021). In a study by Govindasamy and Mestry (2022), the researchers described how middle managers go beyond monitoring the use of curricular resources and instead focus on the alignment between the curriculum and lesson plans. Further, they analyzed student outcomes, district policies, and curricular changes that impacted the organization (Govindasamy & Mestry, 2022). These individuals played a critical role in supporting the principal with curriculum management, which improved the quality of instruction. On the contrary, the researchers never specified if middle managers were ICs. Therefore, it is unknown if ICs are impacted by the distributive leadership. Regardless, they still play a role in supporting teachers in utilizing the curriculum.

There are various instances when coaches are appointed to lead curriculum implementation and evaluation at their school. Similar to the academic content mentioned at the district level (Galey-Horn & Wouflin, 2021), coaches also focus on the curriculum of tested subjects, such as mathematics, at the campus level (Galey-Horn, 2020; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). Case in point, Kane and Rosenquist (2019) explained how the IC supported teachers in a numeracy curriculum by creating learning objectives, building assessments, designing data protocols, and planning intervention programs aligned with the curriculum and state standards. Thus, it is apparent that the coach produces systems to cultivate successful outcomes among teachers and students. Moreover, the IC was responsible for obtaining test data from the curriculum to analyze with teachers (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019).

Significantly, coaching conversations aligned with the curricular resource to support instructional decisions occurred in Kane and Rosenquist's (2019) study. In contrast, the findings omitted how the IC extended teachers' professional learning of the numeracy curriculum. By excluding such details, no evidence exists to confirm if coaches are leading teacher PD.

Overall, this section established that administrators, at the district and campus levels, are most influential in curriculum leadership within K-12 schools. In the studies examined above, coaches are often overlooked compared to other staff, such as teachers. Nonetheless, there was evidence of their leadership in curriculum development and evaluation. What remains missing is the curricular connection to teacher PD, which is not often led by ICs.

Teacher Professional Development

School districts provide professional development (PD) for instructors of all contents and grade levels to fulfill the requirements of federal and local policies (Brown & Bogiages, 2019; Siver et al., 2019; Woulfin, 2018). Considering that ICs do not often lead teacher PD, it was essential to study the differences between the three major types of professional learning. In the following section, I analyze findings within the literature on Pedagogical PD, curricular PD, and professional learning communities (PLCs).

Pedagogical PD

Teachers of K-12 schools are required to attend pedagogical PD to increase their delivery skills (Woulfin, 2018), yet facilitators of this professional learning overlook the curriculum. Instead, the workshops emphasize strategies to enhance participants' awareness of research-based literacy skills (Siver et al., 2019; Smith & Williams, 2020; Wasik & Hindman, 2020). For instance, the teachers in Smith and Williams' (2020) qualitative study learned how to model, self-monitor, and summarize while reading rigorous texts. On the contrary, the researchers did

not name curricular resources used to derive the strategies. Thus, there is no way to confirm if the literacy skills aligned with the curriculum used by the teachers. Smith and Williams (2020) also found that participants expressed discomfort in teaching the strategies to different types of students. Consequently, the teachers struggled to apply the strategies because their professional learning failed to include practices that implemented the curriculum. Outcomes such as this insinuate that pedagogical PD is incomplete without opportunities for coaching.

Some components of pedagogical PD mirror classroom coaching, yet ICs are not included as a support for participants. Instead, workshop facilitators adopt coaching practices to train teachers (Cassidy & Puttick, 2022; Siver et al., 2019). To demonstrate, Siver et al. (2019) utilized videos, role-playing, classroom observations, and feedback sessions to enhance elementary teachers' current literacy strategies. Despite their efforts, results from the interview data suggested that participants felt uncertain about teaching the strategies (Siver et al., 2019). This confirms that teachers need access to the campus IC when receiving ongoing support during and after PD. In addition to these findings, the participants believed the strategies were too difficult for students (Siver et al., 2019). Like Smith and Williams' (2020) study, Siver et al. (2019) narrowly named and connected the training to the curriculum, which outlined student expectations for literacy. Similarly, teachers' knowledge of numeracy skills demonstrated similar limitations in their PD.

Like pedagogical PD for literacy, workshops for numeracy also highlight critical skills, yet there is limited opportunity for teachers to link their knowledge to the curriculum. Multiple studies have named how facilitators engage participants in simulated sessions, requiring teachers to think like students (Brown & Bogiages, 2019; Kelter et al., 2021; Saxena & Chiu, 2022). By illustration, Brown and Bogiages (2019) described how participants analyzed, modified, and

created their mathematical functions. While this study excluded the campus IC, the researchers did select activities from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) curriculum, a step that was missed by Smith and Williams (2020) and Siver et al. (2019). Still, the findings did not mention teachers' ability to connect the numeracy strategies to the expectations of the CCSS curriculum. Hence, there is no evidence indicating that the participants internalize the content as mathematics teachers. Instead, they experience the PD from the perspective of a student with no guidance from a school leader, such as the campus IC. The implication is that the curriculum should be an element of teacher training.

Ultimately, teachers have access to training for strategies, as this is proven through the studies on pedagogical PD; however, ICs are not mentioned as a support factor during such professional learning. While multiple scholars reference the curriculum as a foundation for pedagogical PD, there were no findings to substantiate that teachers are making connections to their curricular resources. As a result, there was a need to determine if this process occurs during curricular PD with both teachers and coaches.

Curricular PD

Curricular PD stresses the academic content rather than classroom pedagogy for teachers in K-12 public schools (Jonker et al., 2020). Still, scholars have yet to explain if teachers engage in aspects of curriculum development with the campus IC during these professional learning experiences (Lowell & McNeill, 2022; Perrotta, 2021; Pringle et al., 2018). For example, Perrotta (2021) discovered that teachers who attend training on a civics curriculum immerse themselves in the state standards, textbook contents, and additional learning materials. The PD allowed participants to make meaning of the curriculum. On the contrary, the findings did not discuss whether participants crafted curricular units or analyzed existing lessons that aligned

with the civics curriculum. Instead, teachers participated in collaborative discussions, document analysis, and informal debates (Perrotta, 2021). As seen in the previous studies about PD (Brown & Bogiages, 2019; Siver et al., 2019; Smith & Williams, 2020), Perrotta (2021) also excluded the campus IC. Considering that scholars have confirmed coaches' responsibility of ensuring curriculum alignment to lesson plans (Govindasamy & Mestry, 2022), there was a need to include them in the research.

While studies remain limited, there is evidence that both teachers and ICs participate in curricular PD. During these workshops, teachers are more likely to engage in curriculum development for their academic content (Hubbard et al., 2020; Lesley et al., 2020). Namely, Hubbard et al. (2020) included the campus coach in a PD that blended the social studies and science curriculum; however, the findings were exclusive to teachers' experiences. These participants crafted curricular units that included learning objectives, guiding questions, and mini-assessments for their classes. Furthermore, they simultaneously utilized various curricular resources, such as textbooks, state standards, and educational websites (Hubbard et al., 2020). Unlike the participants in previous studies (Brown & Bogiages, 2019; Siver et al., 2019), these teachers internalized and connected the curriculum to their lesson plans. While teachers worked collaboratively in grade-level teams, Hubbard et al. (2020) excluded the conversations that occurred. Consequently, how teachers partnered to create unit plans during their training remains unknown.

Certain facilitators of curricular PD encourage participants to not only work in grade-level groups but to divide sections of their unit plans according to the skillset of each teacher. Studies show this process is primarily teacher-led instead of receiving guidance from the campus IC (Granger et al., 2018; Herro et al., 2022; Moore et al., 2021; Perrotta, 2021). In particular,

Herro et al. (2022) described how their content and grade level groups teacher participants to co-create science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curricular units. Strategically, they exchanged expertise in their knowledge of the academic content, STEM curriculum, and unit assessments (Herro et al., 2022). Significantly, the teachers intentionally leveraged their curricular tasks to create a viable unit for all team members. This confirms the results of the post-PD survey, which illustrated teachers' comfort with the STEM curriculum and grade-level collaboration (Herro et al., 2022). On the contrary, the researchers did not explain how the teachers would continue to meet and plan curricular units following this PD. While excluded from this study, the campus IC typically coordinates collaborative planning opportunities.

The literature analysis revealed that curricular PD is available to teachers and provides insight into the academic subject through state standards, learning materials, and curriculum resources. Rarely are ICs invited to these trainings, yet there is a great chance of curriculum development and collaborative planning that may occur among instructors. Coaches are left to facilitate collaborative co-planning among teachers during professional learning communities (PLC); however, the extent to which ICs reference pedagogy and curriculum during these meetings remains the question.

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Alongside pedagogical and curricular PD, teachers have access to PLC for extended professional learning and collaborative planning. Multiple scholars have asserted that these ongoing meetings include teachers of the same grade level and content (Keijzer, 2020; Shim & Thompson, 2021; Zhang et al., 2016). A study by Shim and Thompson (2021) described the cadence of a high school science PLC that included setting goals, crafting lessons, analyzing data, and asking questions to improve their practice. In this way, participants worked together to

form a consensus around their lesson plans; however, it is unknown whether curricular resources were used during their co-planning. Therefore, readers of the study may assume teachers' lessons were not aligned with the curriculum. Instead of inviting the campus IC, the researchers included a district coach to assist participants in the PLC process (Shim & Thompson, 2021). Despite that, the findings did not indicate whether the district coach was instrumental in helping teachers connect lessons to curricular resources, if any. Outcomes such as this signify the need for campus ICs to lead PLC meetings and address this gap, which is typically the case.

Outside of the findings from the previous study, it is common for ICs to lead PLCs, which include the guidance of teacher planning and professional learning. Coaches incorporate learning materials when addressing expectations for classroom instruction (Lesley et al., 2021; Sham & Thompson, 2021; Van Meeuwen et al., 2020). For example, Lesley et al. (2021) depicted the campus IC, who crafted the instructional framework used during PLC. Further, the English team referenced this document for research-based literacy strategies before engaging in collaborative planning (Lesley et al., 2021). This demonstrates how the coach referred to her original resources during PLC.

Conversely, the researchers did not examine the correlation between this instructional framework and the approved district curriculum. Taking that into account, it is unclear if the coach was aware of one or solely relying on her system, which has roots in literacy strategies. This presents an inquiry on whether coaches are leading PLC with an official curriculum or content based on pedagogy.

Some campus ICs focus on delivery strategies during PLC meetings to extend teachers' professional learning from pedagogical PD. Scholars have upheld that coaches emphasize these skills to enhance teachers' capacity in literacy and numeracy instruction (Esperat, 2021; Hui,

2020; Thompson, 2019). For instance, a study by Esperat (2021) found that the campus IC spent the PLC unpacking pedagogical strategies for middle school English teachers. This includes the analysis and discourse of professional learning materials, such as booklets, articles, and PowerPoint presentations, outlining best literacy practices (Esperat, 2021). In other words, teachers were not exposed to curricular resources but instead to pedagogical publications that were more generic than specific to middle school English. Hence, teachers desired to increase their content knowledge in addition to teaching techniques based on the evidence (Esperat, 2021). Still, it remains unclear if a formal curriculum is utilized during PLC, such as a textbook available to coaches and teachers.

ICs who acknowledge the curriculum typically reinforce using district-approved textbooks during PLC (Dehdary, 2017). While doing so, coaches use these texts to co-plan lessons with teachers (Bieda et al., 2020; Piper et al., 2018; Polikoff et al., 2020). For instance, Bieda et al. (2020) provided a study amid the limited research that described how the campus IC equipped teachers with the district's mathematics textbook and referred to it during collaborative planning. Moreover, the coach provided the official state standards and a district pacing calendar to help teachers align their pedagogy with the curriculum (Bieda et al., 2020). To restate, the campus IC led with approved curricular resources to encourage effective planning among teachers. Regardless, results from participant interviews revealed that teachers lacked guidance on how to teach mathematics content (Bieda et al., 2020). Studies like this confirm that teachers need access to the curriculum and modeling to make the necessary connections. The intersection of both is minimal by ICs who lead PLC.

Ultimately, the findings from the previous studies illustrated how ICs extended teachers' professional learning by leading PLC meetings of similar content and grade levels. There is some

proof that coaches attempt to make connections to the curriculum using frameworks and textbooks; however, there is greater evidence of their efforts to impact pedagogy. As a result, an imbalance between curricular and pedagogical planning occurs among ICs during PLC.

This section examined the outcomes of studies on pedagogical PD, curricular PD, and professional learning communities (PLC). It uncovers that ICs are not key players in training for curriculum and pedagogy; however, they manage teachers' professional learning during PLC meetings. The literature gap here suggests a need to understand how coaches immerse in professional learning as school leaders responsible for curriculum leadership at their campuses.

Literature Gap

The previous sections revealed literature gaps within scholarship on ICs, curriculum leadership, and teacher PD. Findings on the IC highlighted their pedagogical support, but the existing literature did not reveal their capacity to learn or lead curricular tasks. These outcomes suggest a need for research that covers coaches' access to curriculum leadership development, considering that most studies overlooked ICs and focused on other school leaders. Although few scholars have mentioned coaches' involvement with curriculum development and evaluation, there is room to discover how ICs engage in all aspects of the curricula at the campus level. Finally, studies on teacher PD indicated that coaches are often excluded from pedagogical and curricular training, yet they facilitated ongoing PLC meetings to extend PD opportunities for instructors. Despite understanding how coaches facilitated PLC, the literature lacked findings that disclosed how ICs gleaned information from teacher PD to develop their craft. Thus, the literature gap led to the research gap on ICs and their experiences in curriculum leadership development.

Research Gap

In previous years, ICs have claimed the title of curriculum and instruction experts in K-12 schools (Woulfin et al., 2023). Despite this, their training and leadership opportunities have revolved around supporting teachers' pedagogical capacity with little emphasis on the curriculum. The existing literature about coaches captured their role at the campus and district levels, their participation in PD, and their leadership during PLC meetings - all of which highlighted pedagogical practices. Nevertheless, ICs' experiences in professional learning for curriculum leadership have not been studied by scholars up to this point.

Considering this, additional research was warranted to acknowledge the voices of coaches engaged in curriculum leadership development. While the existing literature insinuated that ICs were overlooked for such opportunities, this study disclosed their experiences while creating a reference for other school leaders.

Summary

In this literature review, I examined ICs' involvement in leading teachers in coaching support and professional learning. Primarily, I reviewed coaches' responsibilities, PD experiences, and teacher training provided during coaching cycles. Next, I considered how they contributed to curriculum leadership at the district and campus levels. Finally, I focused on their role in teacher PD, which was apparent during the facilitation of professional learning community (PLC) meetings. Still, there remains a research gap in ICs' experiences in curriculum leadership development, which resulted in this phenomenological study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore instructional coaches' perceptions of their professional learning related to curriculum development and leadership. Upon doing so, I applied the methodological framework of phenomenology to interpret the essence of their lived experiences at the campus level. Throughout this chapter, I included various sections that supported the answers to my research questions: philosophical underpinnings, research design, methods for data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and delimitations.

Philosophical Underpinnings

An interpretive paradigm guided the approach to this study. Interpretivism considers the human experience through a subjective lens to understand the perspectives of others (Fuyane, 2021; Hiller, 2016). In doing so, interpretivism adopts subjectivist epistemology, relativist ontology, and balanced axiology to make meaning of the data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). These elements included assumptions, beliefs, and values that influenced the research. In the following paragraphs, I explain the pieces of interpretivism that align with the approach for this study.

The subjectivist epistemology of an interpretive paradigm assumes a construction of knowledge through interactions with others (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In simple terms, the researcher engages in a process to interpret the experiences expressed by those being researched. This assumption is supported when researchers speak, listen, question, and record participant interactions (Fuyane, 2021; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). For example, this process occurred when I conducted participant interviews with the coach participants and recorded their responses for data analysis—including this epistemological stance allowed me to interpret the viewpoints of instructional coaches (ICs) and build my knowledge of their experiences in curriculum

leadership development. Further, it supported my ontology, another aspect of the interpretive paradigm used in this study.

The relativist ontology of an interpretive paradigm assumes the belief that multiple realities exist in the study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). These realities are explored through interactions between the researcher and participants. Unlike positivism, this assumption rejects singular or fixed viewpoints and recognizes the interdependence of various interpretations (Fuyane, 2021; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Applying this ontological stance allowed me to embrace the multiple realities among ICs and their interpretations of the curriculum leadership development they experienced. This led to my axiological stance within the interpretive paradigm.

The balanced axiology of an interpretive paradigm assumes that the researchers' values will be reflected in the study's findings (Farrow et al., 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Due to the subjectivity and multiple realities within the research, it was crucial to include a criterion of trustworthiness, such as credibility and confirmability, with participants. Such strategies included member checking, triangulation, and reflexivity (Billups, 2021). As the researcher, I needed to construct knowledge alongside the participants while recognizing my positionality and personal assumptions. This axiological stance assisted me in attributing values and ethics to the study by applying strategies of trustworthiness, such as triangulation and reflexive self-analysis (Billups, 2021), that upheld my interpretive paradigm.

Ultimately, interpretivism centers the human experience through subjectivity to understand participants' perspectives (Fuyane, 2021; Hiller, 2016). Applying a subjectivist epistemology, relativist ontology, and balanced axiology allowed me to make connections between the literature, conceptual framework, and research process for the study. Considering

the evolution of school leaders, it was necessary to interpret the experiences of ICs through interactions that constructed knowledge of their development in curriculum leadership.

Research Design

Upon conducting this study, I utilized a qualitative research design. Scholars have defined this approach as understanding how individuals interpret, construct, and make meaning of situations (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Unique to qualitative design, researchers engage in an iterative process with participants and data to uncover new distinctions within the context of human experiences (Small, 2021). In simple terms, the qualitative technique is nonlinear and requires a cyclical analysis of components contributing to the study, such as the research purpose, theoretical framework, and data collection (Bhattacharya, 2017). Moreover, researchers routinely reflect on their values, beliefs, and assumptions before providing implications and recommendations for future studies (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Upon collecting data for this study, I employed a qualitative research design. I conducted two interviews with each participant, analyzed artifacts from their professional learning experiences, and completed an online researcher journal. I used these methods to reflect on the collected data and its correlation to my research purpose, questions, and theoretical framework. Thus, using a qualitative research approach permitted me to understand the lived experiences of coaches' curriculum leadership development from their perspective.

Research Methodology

I selected phenomenology as the research methodology for this study. As coined by Edmund Husserl, this approach captures the description of a phenomenon that is consciously experienced by individuals (Van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology is rooted in the experience, not the reality, of a situation. Moreover, scholars claim that consciousness is the foundation of

knowledge derived from a phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014; von Herrmann, 2013). Thus, people become aware of an event as it appears in their thoughts (Gallagher, 2022). The main objective of this methodology was to reveal the essence of individuals' lived experiences (von Herrmann, 2013). Simply put, phenomenology was used to understand the essential meaning collected upon studying how participants perceive a phenomenon (Dahlberg, 2006).

Phenomenology was appropriate for this study to understand the essence of curriculum coaching and leadership development interpreted by ICs. Namely, this methodology revealed how they experienced the phenomenon of curriculum leadership development. Furthermore, this approach enabled me to construct an essential meaning that reflected their lived experiences within the K-12 educational context. This fostered an awareness of the consciousness coaches encounter when learning to execute curricular initiatives.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

To identify individuals with a deep understanding of the phenomenon, I used purposeful sampling when recruiting participants for the study. According to Patton (2015), purposeful sampling allows the researcher to choose members of a population who can articulate detailed information about the purpose of the research. Thus, this approach permitted me to intentionally select participants who could provide insight and answers to my research questions (Emmel, 2013; Mayan, 2009). Considering the study's timeframe, purposeful sampling was the most efficient approach to recruiting individuals within the current school year. Those who qualified for my study met the following selection criteria:

- Full-time campus instructional coach (IC)
- Minimum three years of experience as a campus IC
- Employed within a K-12 public school district

- Provide teacher support for one or more core content subjects: reading, mathematics, social studies, or science
- Participated in IC professional learning focused on curriculum or as a curriculum component

The selection criteria were created to ensure the study's intentionality, which ultimately highlights voices with experience relevant to the phenomenon. By making the criteria exclusive to full-time campus ICs, I captured the perspectives of a specific school leader with unique insights on the research topic. Next, the required years of experience in coaching allowed for more familiarity with the research topic and expertise relevant to the phenomenon. Further, recruiting participants employed within a K-12 public school district guaranteed that coaches had access to the curriculum established at the state or local level. The condition for providing teacher support in core content subjects targeted ICs who led curricular initiatives specific to academics. Finally, the requirement of coaches' experience in professional learning focused on curriculum was necessary to ensure that participants could respond to interview questions that aligned with research questions.

Considering my methodology, I recruited six participants to produce a descriptive phenomenological study. This range of participants was intentional for the research process to cultivate high-quality interviews and meaningful relationships with participants (Mayan, 2009). A recent study by Bartholomew et al. (2021) confirmed that larger sample sizes in phenomenological research repress participants' voices, negatively impacting the descriptions of phenomena. Therefore, the sample size remained small enough to convey ICs' expressions of consciousness in curriculum coaching and professional learning experiences. By doing so, my

study maintained authenticity, credibility, and transferability for future studies that correlate with the research topic.

To recruit participants, I developed a flyer to email members of professional organizations. This flyer included information about the study, the purpose of the research, participant criteria, and my contact information. I obtained a listserve from national groups, such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and EDU Coach Network, to commence correspondence with prospective participants. ASCD was selected because its members consist of K-12 school leaders, including ICs, who are interested in opportunities related to curricula and professional learning. Likewise, the EDU Coach Network is a community of ICs committed to learning, growing, and connecting outside the campus setting. Collectively, both associations provided access to coaches across the nation who qualified for the study. Moreover, their interest in these organizations increased the likelihood of them understanding the phenomenon of this study.

In addition to emailing the flyer, I published it on social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, and X [formerly known as Twitter]). Utilizing social media was necessary because many school leaders, such as ICs, interact with online communities and share information about educational opportunities (Miller et al., 2023). Initially, I posted the flyer to my personal social media pages to generate awareness and shareability of the study among my followers, some of whom include coaches. After a week of circulation, I asked professional organizations to share the flyer on their social media platforms to reach a larger audience of coaches who qualified for the study. Creating a diverse participant pool ultimately attracted ICs of different school districts who experienced the phenomenon.

This recruitment window lasted one month to generate awareness, address general questions, and identify qualified participants for the study. Following collecting initial responses via the listservs and social media, I asked prospective participants to complete an interest survey on Microsoft Forms, which compiled details on participants' backgrounds, experiences, and curiosities related to the phenomenon into a spreadsheet. Upon utilizing a multi-tiered selection process, I filtered the responses to include individuals who met the criteria, which yielded eight potential ICs; however, only six completed both interviews and contributed artifacts necessary for the study.

Participant Background Information

The participants of this study included six coaches of primary and secondary K-12 schools, whose names were replaced by pseudonyms. Their background information is summarized in the following paragraphs, followed by a chart containing their demographics.

Chelsea

With no prior background in curriculum, Chelsea developed most of her knowledge and practices during district professional learning. Nonetheless, she remains proactive in maximizing opportunities to extend her curriculum leadership development for her coaching role in all academic subjects.

Gretchen

Although Gretchen has no previous background or education in curriculum leadership, she has vast experience in professional learning, which she credits to her school district's support. She continues to embark on training to support her elementary coaching role.

Harlow

While Harlow's background and educational experiences are limited in curriculum leadership, she has an extensive history in professional learning. In her current coaching role, she remains active in curriculum leadership development for all subjects.

Iris

With a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, Iris was knowledgeable of practices to support teachers in curricular initiatives before her district professional learning opportunities. Despite her previous preparation, she continues to immerse herself in training that improves her curriculum leadership skills.

Jill

Jill depends on the knowledge and practices she obtained during graduate school, which emphasized curriculum. Currently, she attends and advocates for professional learning to enhance her coaching support for middle school teachers.

Nina

Although Nina's background and educational experiences are limited in curriculum, she has an extensive history of advocating for professional learning. Today, she continues to maximize opportunities for curriculum leadership development in all middle school subjects.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Years of Experience	School Type	Grade Level Assignment	Subject Assignment	State
Chelsea	5	Elementary School	K-5	All Subjects	Colorado
Gretchen	6	Elementary School	K-2	Reading Language Arts	Pennsylvania

Harlow	5	High School	9-12	All Subjects	New Jersey
Iris	3	Elementary School	K-2	Reading Language Arts and Mathematics	Texas
Jill	19	Middle School	6-8	Reading Language Arts and Social Studies	Vermont
Nina	5	Middle School	6-8	All Subjects	Georgia

Data Collection

To generate data for the study, I employed specific qualitative methods to answer my research questions: interviews, artifacts, and a researcher journal (Annink, 2016; Billups, 2021). These techniques were selected to understand the phenomenon's essence and reflect on thoughts that arise during the data collection. The following paragraphs detail each strategy as it relates to my study.

Interviews

This study consisted of two 45 to 60-minute individual interviews with each participant to understand the phenomenon of professional learning in curriculum development and leadership. Considering the interpretive design of the study, I utilized semi-structured interviews to adopt a flexible format of questions that support the research topic (Bernard et al., 2017; Billups, 2021). Further, this approach enabled me to control the interview process yet shift to follow the participants' lead (Bernard et al., 2017; Billups, 2021). Therefore, semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method to comprehend the essence of their

shared, lived experiences (Squires, 2023). Doing so provided a first-person interpretation of curriculum coaching and professional learning from the perspectives of ICs.

To remain efficient in the data collection process, I conducted online interviews with each participant. A digital interviewing format was appropriate for my study because it encouraged feasible communication for participants anytime and anywhere (Salmons, 2014). Although Skype, Facetime, and Google Hangouts are considered popular products for dialogue (Billups, 2021), I used Microsoft TEAMS to facilitate participant interviews. This free platform allowed me to schedule and send formal meeting invitations, customize the privacy settings, and enable components to transfer information, such as screen sharing and the chat feature (Hubbard, 2021). Further, I recorded my interviews with participants, which included transcribing our dialogue during the first and second interviews (Hubbard, 2021).

Following the phenomenological protocol, I facilitated two semi-structured interviews with each participant to glean their experiences and provide a follow-up session. Specifically, the first interview (see Appendix A) consisted of questions to reveal participants' descriptions of the experienced phenomenon. To commence the discussion, I inquired about coaches' perspectives and stories on curriculum coaching. Next, I asked about their feelings, thoughts, and observations during their PD experience in curriculum leadership development (Billups, 2021). Finally, I sought details on significant moments during their professional learning, which included coaches' connections, transformative takeaways, and reflections on training for curriculum leadership development (Billups, 2021). Finally, I conducted a second round of interviews with participants to discuss their reflections and experiences obtaining curriculum coaching knowledge and practices (see Appendix B).

Artifacts

In addition to interviews, I collected artifacts related to the phenomenon. Between the first and the second interviews, I asked participants to email me these artifacts: handouts from professional development, curriculum maps, collaboration forms, textbook rubrics, syllabi, unit plans, and/or lesson plans. During the second interview, I asked participants to explain the artifact(s) they brought and how it informed their development with curriculum coaching knowledge and practices. Following the interview process, I reviewed, recorded, and interpreted how these artifacts support other data points, such as participant interviews and my researcher's journal (Billups, 2021). Utilizing this data collection technique was appropriate for my research because it provided background information and contextual insight into the phenomenon (Kutsyuruba, 2023). Moreover, these artifacts helped to verify my findings if participants had forgotten critical details related to their experiences in curricular PD (Kutsyuruba, 2023). The combination of interviews and artifacts yielded an opportunity for a final, reflective data source - the researcher's journal.

Researcher's Journal

As a final data collection technique, I completed a researcher's journal to reflect on my thoughts that arose during the data collection process. Considering that my interviews occurred online, my journal was in an online format via Google Sheets, where I could access my reflections and add comments as needed. Specifically, I recorded my thoughts during and after the interview process. Doing this helped to rationalize my decision-making by recording my observations, questions, assumptions, and emotions (Annink, 2016). Further, engaging in this reflective process benefited me in remembering key thoughts and ideas without compromising the data (Annink, 2016). Ultimately, this technique allowed me to remain focused on my participants while assuring the trustworthiness of my study.

Data Analysis

Upon analyzing data from interview transcripts, I used a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive coding to reveal the essential meaning of the phenomenon. Put differently, I created a list of codes that aligned with my conceptual framework: the Curriculum Development Model (Saylor et al., 1981) and the Professional Development (PD) Model (Buysse et al., 2009). (see Appendix C). This combination provided a flexible foundation for effective data analysis (Miles et al., 2019). During the first and second cycles of coding, I employed various methods, which I explain in the following sub-sections.

First Cycle Coding

I commenced my data analysis with a priori coding to label interview data according to the components of my conceptual framework (see Appendix C). Primarily, data segments that aligned with an a priori code were tagged to match words or phrases from a predetermined list. For example, many participants described the methods they learned for unit planning during their curriculum leadership development, which resulted in multiple codes entitled “curriculum design.” Similarly, many participants described the format of their professional learning that helped to increase their knowledge and practices in curriculum leadership, which resulted in multiple codes entitled “how.” Starting with this deductive approach influenced connections to the conceptual framework and led to a seamless second cycle of coding.

Second Cycle Coding

After my initial round summarizing data, I completed a second cycle using pattern coding. By definition, pattern coding is an approach for classifying data into smaller categories, themes, or concepts (Miles et al., 2019). This additional cycle of coding resulted in understanding more comprehensive ideas and how they connected with the conceptual

framework (Miles et al., 2019). Namely, the data collected in this study was classified into smaller themes that reflected what coaches learned during training and how they acquired curriculum leadership development. For example, interview data that reflected coaches' professional learning of design, implementation, and evaluation was refined to a smaller theme to filter similarities and patterns within the participants' statements. As illustrated in the table below, the codes were ultimately categorized into themes that aligned with the findings of this study. Upon completing the second cycle of coding, I ensured trustworthiness during the process.

Table 2

Findings from the Coding Process

Findings	Themes	Codes
Learning in Fragments	Limited Knowledge of Curriculum Leadership	Curriculum Design Objectives Curriculum Implementation Curriculum Evaluation Organizational Structures Who What How
Learning Outside the District	Gleaning from External Experts	Resources External Forces Access Who What How
Learning Within a Community	Development of Knowledge in Coach PLC Development of Practices in Teacher-Professional Learning	Outreach Access Who What How

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness within my study, I applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I combined all four techniques to produce confidence in readers of the research. The following paragraphs explain the strategies I employed for each element of trustworthiness.

To ensure credibility, I used strategies to guarantee that the findings were congruent with the research. The first technique was triangulation. In applying this strategy, I collected multiple types of data to code and interpret the findings. Specifically, triangulation consisted of interviews, artifacts, and a researcher's journal focused on the phenomenon (Stahl & King, 2020). Applying the techniques led to the recognition of identifiable patterns that were consistent throughout the study.

In addition to triangulation, I utilized member checking for credibility. This technique involved sending preliminary findings to select participants to examine the accuracy of the interpretation (Candela, 2019). Incorporating this strategy verified my understanding of the participants' perspectives and the shared essence of the studied phenomenon. The final strategy, reflexive self-analysis, was used to question my findings through bracketed comments in a research log (Stahl & King, 2020). In doing so, I engaged in an iterative practice to remain conscious of my thoughts and actions. Ultimately, all three strategies confirmed credibility and resulted in other forms of trustworthiness.

In addition to credibility, I sought to ensure transferability within the study. Unlike generalizability, which is rooted in probability, transferability was appropriate for this qualitative study because of the detailed findings, which included a thick description of contextual information (Stahl & King, 2020). I conveyed an in-depth interpretation of the findings, allowing

researchers to apply the information to their studies (Stahl & King, 2020). Specifically, transferability was significant for this study in allowing researchers to apply the findings to any K-12 educational context, despite the school district's location, demographics, or funding, ultimately yielding dependability within the study.

Alongside credibility and transferability, I established dependability within the study. The strategies used for this aspect of trustworthiness included peer debriefing and bracketing via my researcher's journal. Upon employing peer debriefing, I sought professional peers, such as committee members, who analyzed my findings and provided feedback (Stahl & King, 2020). Doing so warranted necessary revisions and extended trust to readers of the study; further, bracketing promoted dependability through the reflexive analysis of separating data from interpretations (Stahl & King, 2020). Upon collecting data, I bracketed my thoughts in my online researcher's journal. Utilizing this strategy helped me monitor personal biases and assumptions during the research process. Collectively, applying both strategies resulted in a dependable study with confirmability.

Finally, I guaranteed confirmability within the study. This strategy involved closeness to the reality of the research through precision and accuracy (Stahl & King, 2020). I embraced this technique by engaging in iterative practices and involving other professional peers throughout the process. Confirmability, in addition to the previously mentioned strategies, produced a trustworthy study.

Delimitations

Rather than imposing restrictions, this research's delimitations entailed the research's scope and established parameters for participants (Miles, 2019). Put differently, these boundaries

informed readers of information included and omitted from the research. The following delimitations were enacted for the design of this study:

- *Participant Selection Criteria*. Participants were limited to full-time campus ICs with a minimum of three years of experience in coaching for a K-12 public school. Furthermore, participants were selected according to their experiences in professional development focused on curriculum or a curriculum component.
- *Geographic Scope*. The research was exclusive to IC participants who worked in K-12 public schools within the United States of America. This geographic delimitation helped to focus perspectives on the K-12 curriculum promoted by federal, state, and local policies.
- *Time Frame*. Research for this study occurred during the 2023-2024 school year. This constraint provided time for ICs to reflect on their professional learning in curriculum leadership development during the Fall and Spring semesters, which added to the study's educational context.
- *School Type*. Rather than including private, charter, and post-secondary schools, this study was exclusive to ICs who work in K-12 public schools. This delimitation aligned with federal policies that required instructional coaching for primary and secondary public schools, which was relevant to my study.

Summary

Overall, this chapter entailed various sections to guide this study. In particular, the philosophical underpinnings, research design, data collection and analysis methods, trustworthiness, and delimitations provided context for the research. In the following chapter, I

explored and discussed the findings from the data in response to the research questions. This yielded recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The following chapter provides the findings from the data reflecting the experiences of instructional coaches (ICs) participants for K-12 public schools. The purpose of this study was to explore coaches' perceptions of their professional learning related to curriculum development and leadership. The research questions included (a) How do ICs perceive professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership? and (b) How do instructional coaches describe the development of their curriculum coaching knowledge and practices? Ultimately, coaches' perspectives represent their shared phenomenon in professional learning for curriculum leadership. Upon applying the conceptual framework, which included the Saylor et al. (1981) curriculum development model and the Buysse et al. (2009) professional development model, I identified three main findings: (a) learning in fragments, (b) learning outside the district, and (c) learning within a community. These findings were identified by themes expressed by all the participants, which included exemplar statements from interview data. In the following sections, I provide context for each finding and evidence for each subtheme. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Learning in Fragments

The first finding, learning in fragments, correlated with the first research question: how do ICs perceive professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership? As defined by the conceptual framework, leadership for curriculum development consists of three major components: design, implementation, and evaluation (Saylor et al., 1981). While design signifies the structuring of information within a curriculum, implementation involves strategic execution, which leads to evaluation - assessing the value of a curriculum (Saylor et al., 1981). I asked

questions like, “As a participant in professional learning, what was your experience with opportunities in curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation?” to comprehend how coaches perceived their professional learning experiences. Rather than understanding each component as an interconnected cycle of curriculum leadership, participants perceived their professional learning in fragments. Thus, one theme was identified among all six participants: limited knowledge of curriculum leadership. The following section includes evidence from participants’ interview statements and references to artifacts to support this finding. Ultimately, learning in fragments had a disadvantageous influence on coaches’ curriculum leadership development. Namely, participants never understood how to connect design, implementation, and evaluation for their daily coaching responsibilities. Consequently, their experiences revealed that ICs are not transferring comprehensive skills from the district to the campus setting because they have limited knowledge of curriculum leadership.

Limited Knowledge of Curriculum Leadership

Every participant expressed limited knowledge of curriculum leadership in response to their perception of professional learning opportunities. Namely, the participants’ experiences at the district level were limited to learning one component at a time: design, implementation, or evaluation. Therefore, the participants never articulated how their professional learning merged all three components to impact their coaching practices.

While the evidence of participants’ limited knowledge of curriculum leadership was prevalent throughout the data, certain exemplary statements highlighted what they learned and how it was perceived from a coaching perspective. For example, Gretchen described her professional learning in designing a new district curriculum that stressed the structure yet excluded how coaches could assist teachers in applying the content. She stated,

> Coming from the company, it was commercialized and sales pitchy. They explained why the resource was great and the different features of the program, but our professional learning didn't drill down on how we could use it for our lessons. It wasn't personalized for the coaches. So, at the end of the day, it was hard to support teachers in using it.

In saying this, Gretchen learned how to design a new curriculum, including the structure, features, learning objectives, and content; however, she was not equipped with the knowledge to assist teachers in implementing this curriculum in the classroom. Instead, the training was "commercialized and sales pitchy" to secure coaches' investment rather than their comprehension of the curriculum. As a result, ICs are left with a one-dimensional understanding of curriculum leadership that is not beneficial to their role and responsibilities in supporting teachers with the curriculum at the campus level.

In addition to Gretchen's statement, Chelsea echoed similar sentiments of limited knowledge of curriculum leadership that highlighted design over implementation and evaluation. Namely, she explained what she learned, backward planning, and how it was not beneficial to the bigger picture of instructional coaching. Moreover, how the PD was delivered was not engaging or significant for the audience of ICs. She explained,

> In our first year, we used this company and the training taught us a lot of backward planning and utilizing the state standards, but it was online and it wasn't very meaningful. People were preoccupied with planning or making copies and then just interjecting when needed because it was not engaging.

In Chelsea's professional learning experience, she learned backward planning - a procedural method for curriculum design that identifies learning standards, objectives, lessons, and evidence of learning to promote student achievement. On the other hand, her training "wasn't very

meaningful" because it missed the mark in providing coaches with opportunities to implement backward planning to curricular units and lesson plans. Further, she lacked the knowledge to evaluate her understanding of backward planning when applied from the coaching perspective. While the online format was problematic for Chelsea, the greater issue for all participants was what they learned and how the content was not impactful to their daily coaching. If ICs' professional learning embedded opportunities for the practice of all curriculum leadership skills, participants would not have time for "planning or making copies." Instead, coaches would maximize their learning to transfer their knowledge from training to teacher PLC and job-embedded coaching to improve teacher growth and student outcomes.

Participants' limited knowledge of curriculum leadership continued, even when they described their experiences implementing a new curriculum. Hence, their understanding of implementation and how to execute a curriculum was separate from one or more areas of curriculum leadership. Although participants' training was led by district administrators, coaches' professional learning yielded gaps that prevented a comprehensive understanding of curriculum leadership. For instance, Harlow mentioned what she learned, the steps to implement a curriculum, yet how she bypassed professional learning for design. She claimed:

> Under the guidance of our curriculum director, I was comfortable following the steps to roll out our new math curriculum. But I skipped learning about how to build it out because I'm not a math person. I left that to the math teachers.

Put differently, Harlow's professional learning experience was limited in curriculum leadership because it only emphasized one component - implementation. The training provided her with the knowledge to "roll out our new math curriculum," yet she lacked the skills to interpret its design because she "skipped learning about how to build it out." While evident among all the

participants, Harlow's response stands out in illuminating the detriments of professional learning that is not only fragmented but optional for coaches responsible for leading curricular initiatives at the campus level. Harlow's statement, "I left that to the math teachers," represents the outcomes of coaches' curriculum leadership development, which is necessary to build capacity, not dependency, on curricular coaching practices.

Further, participants' professional learning resulted in their limited knowledge by excluding opportunities to apply multiple components of curriculum leadership. Namely, none of the participants experienced hands-on practice for implementation. Hence, how coaches would execute the curriculum across their campuses was left to their interpretation due to their fragmented district training. For example, Nina explained how her professional learning embedded rounds of practice for curriculum design, yet she only received information for curriculum implementation. She expressed,

> We had a curriculum supervisor slash trainer who gave us intensive training on the UBD framework and how it could be implemented. She taught us coaches how to create the units and lesson plans and later provided more information on how it should look in the classroom.

To explain, Nina's statement "intensive training on the UBD framework" indicates how she received ample time to practice a technique for curriculum design that implemented learning objectives, assessments, and activities that affected teaching and learning. Conversely, her recollection of learning "information on how it should look" did not provide a practical or engaging experience to help bridge the gap from curriculum design to implementation that occurs across the campus. Considering that this was apparent among all the participants, there is evidence to confirm that coaches lack the knowledge to lead comprehensive curricular initiatives

that require more than knowledge of structure but expertise in systems that shape the delivery and evaluation of a curriculum.

The trend of limited knowledge in curriculum leadership remained accented by participants' understanding of evaluation, which was also isolated from the other curricular components. Similar to the previous examples, ICs described what they learned, yet there was no articulation of how it was relevant to their coaching practice. For instance, Iris expressed learning about evaluation during her district's professional learning, yet there was no opportunity to reflect on her leadership in the design and implementation of the curriculum. She stated,

> During our last curriculum day, the district led us in developing our understanding of the feedback received on the curriculum. Mostly, we discussed what was going on with the curriculum at the campus level. That way, we were able to make the necessary adjustments over the summer.

Similar to all the participants, Iris was immersed in professional learning by district administrators who provided the skills to assess student outcomes, which resulted in an "understanding of the feedback on the curriculum." Simply put, coaches understand how to interpret others' critiquing of the curriculum, yet their professional learning stifles their knowledge of evaluation in their curriculum leadership. In other words, they are not trained to assess their efforts in curricular initiatives that contribute to teacher and student outcomes, such as design and school-wide implementation.

Furthermore, participants' limited knowledge of curriculum leadership was apparent from the tools provided during their district professional learning. For example, the coaches presented evidence of learning curricular components by presenting artifacts. Nonetheless, these documents reflected their fragmented experiences by isolating components of curriculum

leadership, such as evaluation. Out of all the participants, Gretchen's statement and artifact were most illustrative in depicting how coaches taught to evaluate a curriculum; however, what they learned was not reflective or meaningful for improving their campus curriculum leadership. She conveyed,

> They trained us on this curriculum review, which are guidelines for evaluating our resources. Whenever we get a new curriculum, we have to follow these procedures step by step. We're pretty much looking to align with the state standards. Also, we're looking to see whether or not there's good practice instilled in the curriculum for the students.

Gretchen's statement is an example of why coaches are limited in their knowledge of curriculum leadership - their district professional learning is procedural, disconnected from other components of curriculum leadership, and missing opportunities for reflection. Instead of gaining a conceptual understanding of curriculum evaluation, coaches "follow these procedures step by step," which hinders their ability to interpret why a curriculum is valuable or undesirable to student achievement. Furthermore, using a rubric, as referenced by all participants, helps assess the design of a curriculum but lacks questions to evaluate its implementation throughout the school year. Per Gretchen's statement, coaches are trained in "looking for alignment with the state standards" and deciding "whether or not there's good practice." Ultimately, coaches' professional learning at the district level fails to include opportunities for reflection on their curriculum leadership as a multifaceted practice that either improves or impedes results across the campus.

Collectively, coaches are limited in their knowledge of curriculum leadership, which is a result of their fragmented professional learning that occurs at the district level. Hence, coaches

need access to effective development that simultaneously captures all components of curriculum leadership. For this reason, some coaches seek opportunities outside of the school district.

Learning Outside the District

The second finding, learning outside the district, also correlated with the first research question: how do ICs perceive professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership? As illustrated in the conceptual framework, external forces impact other components of training, such as the who, what, and how. I asked participants questions such as, "Can you describe what was covered during your professional learning and who provided the training opportunities?" and "What were the strengths and weaknesses of your professional learning focused on curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation?" to understand their perceptions. In this case, participants perceived curriculum leadership outside the district as purposeful to their development. Thus, one subtheme emerged: gleaning from external experts such as companies, nonprofit organizations, and curriculum consultants. Conclusively, acquiring knowledge from organizations and individuals beyond the school district was beneficial for coaches, as it changed how they perceived and experienced opportunities for curriculum leadership development.

Gleaning from External Experts

To extend their district professional learning, participants attained knowledge, skills, and strategies by gleaning from external experts. Namely, these curriculum experts were companies, nonprofit organizations, and curriculum consultants external to the school district yet relevant to coaches' curriculum leadership development. For instance, Chelsea mentioned how she took advantage of training provided by a nonprofit company of curriculum developers. She stated,

> The district is prioritizing reading growth for kindergarten and third grade, but I have not found what our district offers regarding professional learning to be very useful for a

> coach. So I've attended some of the trainings that were emailed to me by representatives from our reading program.

Rather than depending on district administrators, Chelsea gleaned from external experts, namely curriculum developers from a nonprofit company, who closed her professional learning gaps. To explain, Chelsea learned the skills and strategies to increase "reading growth for kindergarten and third grade," which was excluded from her district training. While her statement is one example of how coaches seek supplemental opportunities, all the participants shared similar sentiments to Chelsea's statement that district professional learning was not "useful for a coach." The participants felt compelled to glean from external experts who could build their capacity in curriculum coaching, initiatives, and outcomes across the campus. Taking such action was necessary for these coaches to eliminate the dependency on district professional learning and remain proactive in outside opportunities, most of which provided hands-on practice for curriculum leadership development.

Significantly, the participants expressed how external experts provided opportunities for simulated professional learning that mirrored effective curriculum coaching within a classroom setting. Put differently, these experts expanded beyond traditional training and exported coaches to campuses to see a live implementation of curricular resources. Gretchen, for example, described her experience attending off-campus professional learning led by a nationwide curriculum company. She described,

> My professional learning with them was the most useful hands-on training. First, they gave a presentation on structured literacy that was helpful. But then they took everyone to a nearby school to watch teachers apply it in real time. Seeing that helped me to better understand our curriculum and how I can support teachers in it.

In this situation, what Gretchen learned about structured literacy was transformed into "useful hands-on training" because the experts provided her with opportunities to learn and experience different angles of curriculum leadership. To explain, providing a "presentation on structured literacy" and watching "teachers apply it in real time" enhanced her knowledge of curriculum design and implementation from a coaching perspective. Similarly, all participants found this hands-on approach effective in learning comprehensive curriculum leadership development, which was practical and transferable to their job-embedded coaching and PLC responsibilities at the campus level. Professional learning that is intentional for coaches, such as the training experienced by Gretchen, is paramount for ICs who support teachers with curriculum leadership daily. Therefore, gleaning from experts outside the district positively impacts coaches' curriculum leadership development, even if the professional learning is virtual.

Alongside in-person opportunities, all the participants articulated alternative methods to access and glean from external experts. For example, virtual professional learning, specifically led by curriculum companies, was named by everyone as advantageous for their curriculum leadership development and coaching schedule. Jill, for instance, discussed how she immersed herself in an online academy to support teachers in a reading-language arts curriculum. In addition to referencing artifacts related to her training, she stated,

> I've sought out this organization for the last five years because they've been a very important part of my professional learning. I've gone to both their in-person symposiums and virtual institutes, where I completed the different modules at my own pace.

To explain, Jill, like the other participants, depended on external experts for high-quality training in various formats. Jill's phrase, "sought out this organization," illustrates participants' autonomous actions to enhance what they learned and how they acquired their knowledge,

including virtual modules for a literacy curriculum. Further, “at my own pace” represented participants’ appreciation for professional learning that was accessible and asynchronous, ultimately allowing the participants to remain on campus without missing opportunities to execute curriculum leadership opportunities. As evidenced by Jill’s statement, coaches need access to training anytime, anywhere that builds upon their district learning and provides downloadable information, relevant examples, and practice opportunities to grasp all components of curriculum leadership. This extended training may also include a variety of resources by external experts, such as books and podcasts, which the study participants also expressed.

From describing nonfiction selections to digital media created for coaches, the participants expounded on resources they accessed to glean from external experts. Across the board, everyone perceived these resources as investments in their coaching, which impacted their curriculum leadership on campus. One of the participants, Nina, mentioned her go-to resource, which she depended on for curriculum design and implementation techniques. She noted, “Most of my knowledge comes from Lucy Calkins. I’ll study her work on curriculum and apply it as my own.” Nina’s statement exemplified the cyclical process of reading, copying, and customizing curriculum that all the participants expressed when gleaning from experts. Moreover, the phrase “apply it as my own” signifies the trust each participant felt when utilizing resources, such as books, to enhance their coaching craft. Similarly, Harlow’s podcast consumption represented the participants’ curiosity and determination to grow their knowledge as curriculum leaders. She stated, “I carve out an hour or two a day and listen to different episodes, mostly to discover strategies for curriculum. Then, I share the episodes with my teachers.” In other words, Harlow, like the other participants, gleaned from external experts to learn “strategies” that were excluded during district professional learning, yet powerful enough

to enhance practices for teachers and coaches. Hence, the resources coaches use to supplement their understanding of the curriculum should not be limited to a single format but diverse to leverage their knowledge of curriculum leadership and its correlation to student achievement, teacher growth, and campus goals.

Overall, this finding illuminates how learning outside the district benefits coaches' knowledge of curriculum leadership and closes professional learning gaps from district training. Specifically, gleaning from external experts provided the participants of this study with hands-on experience and strategies that promoted their competency in curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation. The following finding continues the cadence of what participants learned and how they engaged in curriculum leadership training, yet adds an element of who was involved in their development of knowledge and practices.

Learning within a Community

The final finding, learning within a community, correlated with the second research question: How do ICs describe the development of their curriculum coaching knowledge and practices? Namely, I asked participants questions such as, "Describe the development of your curriculum coaching knowledge and practices" and "When should this professional learning occur for coaches, and who should be responsible for organizing and leading it?" to understand how they acquired their curriculum coaching skills. Significantly, participants perceived the community as professional educators, such as coaches, curriculum specialists, and teachers, who gathered to learn new information and exchange ideas about the curriculum. While this community often met within the district or campus, some assembled at the regional and county levels to expand their expertise and enlarge their coaching network. The first subtheme, knowledge development in coach PLC, was identified as participants assembled within a

community to engage in monthly curricular workshops with other ICs and specialists across the district and state. On the other hand, the second subtheme, development of practices in teacher-professional learning, captured how coaches united with a community of instructors to obtain extended curricular training when provided at the campus level. They were collectively learning within a community that complemented ICs' curriculum leadership development by exposing them to a larger group of coaches with various experience levels and extending their professional learning opportunities to their targeted audience: teachers.

Development of Knowledge in Coach PLC

All participants named coach PLCs as their go-to community when describing the development of their curriculum coaching knowledge. Similar to teacher professional learning communities (PLC), coaching PLC was described as a vast group of coaches and specialists who swapped information about curricular coaching, strategies, and opportunities for guidance. As Gretchen illustrated, the group gathered within workshops to develop their knowledge of curriculum leadership. She noted:

> Our county has something called the CMC: coaching, mentoring, and collaboration. And so once a month, sometimes more, we go and meet with coaches across the county and then sometimes across the state. There's a lady who guides our conversations when we share ideas and break into groups. Overall, CMC is a good way for us to connect with other coaches in the area.

Gretchen's statement exemplified the experience of all participants who described the benefits of learning "ideas" about the curriculum within a PLC session of coaches. Having the opportunity to "go" and "connect" with ICs outside the district provided participants with different perspectives beyond the voices of district and campus administrators, such as their access to

peers across the region. Further, the participants explained how coach PLC was facilitated by a representative, who managed the discussion of curriculum leadership, exchange of strategies, and a workshop for practice opportunities. Thus, the participants were responsible for enhancing their professional learning while speaking into the space and sharing valuable insight. Gretchen's statement, in addition to the experiences of other participants, upholds the significance of coach PLC because it offers ICs an additional avenue of professional learning that develops their curriculum coaching knowledge while cultivating opportunities for guidance, mentorship, and leadership.

The participants described their leadership in facilitating this community when representatives at the regional level did not coordinate coach PLC. While everyone echoed these experiences, Jill's statement highlighted her efforts, alongside other ICs, in guiding this group. She claimed, "We have a coaching community that meets once a month at the regional center for a series of meetings, but it's totally coaches making it for coaches." In other words, the participants of this study were committed to gathering with other ICs across the region; however, the phrase "coaches making it for coaches" signified the responsibility that participants felt when held responsible for managing coach PLC. While this community is unique to coaches' development of knowledge and skills as curriculum leaders, Jill's statement exemplifies why additional support is needed to maintain coach PLC, whether it occurs at the regional or district level.

The participants also expressed opportunities to attend coach PLC inside the district to develop their knowledge of curriculum leadership. As evidenced by participants' responses, gathering with these coaches yielded discussions on the design, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum used in K-12 classrooms. For instance, Iris' experience, which mirrored that of

other participants, allowed her to collaborate with district ICs, who extended her learning about the district's reading curriculum. She explained, "Every month, we meet for the specialist collaboration group with all the coaches and instructional specialists. We're constantly diving into the curriculum and discussing how to implement new research, especially on literacy." Iris' statement is unique in specifying that coaching PLC at the district level resulted in "diving into the curriculum," which allowed ICs to analyze the content of the curriculum, consider its application in the classroom context, and evaluate its impact on student achievement across multiple campuses. Moreover, the phrase "implement new research" directly correlates with what coaches learned, such as best practices, strategies, and techniques, that strengthened their ability to support teachers in implementing the curriculum. Thus, Iris' experience represents that of all participants who found this community beneficial in aligning district curricular expectations and their curriculum coaching practices. Without coach PLC, coaches would lack the skills to learn from one another, ultimately hindering their knowledge development as curriculum leaders. Hence, ICs need opportunities to remain in the community with others, which includes the teachers they coach daily.

Development of Practices in Teacher-Professional Learning

When describing their development of curriculum coaching practices, all participants identified teacher-professional learning as a source of their growth. Such training was depicted as an on-campus opportunity for teachers and coaches to receive curriculum development in a collaborative space. Thus, the participants improved their skills for curriculum leadership while learning within a community of instructors they supported. For example, Chelsea claimed, "I attended all the same professional learning the teachers had on the curriculum, so I learned some techniques and a good roadmap of how to support them." Her statement revealed that coaches

comprehend one or more components of curriculum leadership by participating in training intended for teachers. Further, the acquisition of "techniques" and "a good roadmap" signifies how coaches convert the content from teacher-professional development to fit their toolbox of coaching support. Nina shared similar sentiments in addition to sharing artifacts,

> I was knowledgeable about the practice of understanding by design (UBD) because I completed the sessions with the teachers. When there's a new curriculum initiative, I'm honest with them and say, "I don't quite know how to do this just yet, but let's learn how to do this together."

Nina's statement proves that the development of ICs' practices is contingent upon their commitment to learning within a community, from the district to the campus level. Further, when ICs express transparency by saying, "I don't quite know how to do this" they are acknowledging a need to develop their curriculum leadership, even in the presence of their teachers. Therefore, teacher-professional learning remains a significant vehicle to extend coaches' curriculum leadership development, from traditional training to book studies alongside instructors.

The discussion of how participants developed their curriculum coaching practices was also evident by their participation in campus book studies - another form of teacher professional development that invited input from instructors and school leaders. Harlow, for instance, described how she engaged in discourse with teachers as they analyzed a nonfiction selection that promoted a social-emotional technique for the curriculum. She stated:

> So, we have a book study for coaches and teachers that helps inform our practice. Once we read about mindfulness. That led to a deeper discussion of whether it could be included in the curriculum and integrated into classrooms daily.

Harlow's statement vividly captured how book studies allowed ICs to develop curriculum coaching practices. In her case, they read literature about "mindfulness" and discussed with teachers how it could fit "into classrooms." Thus, conversations from book studies contribute to coaches' development of curriculum practices and impact their teachers' understanding of critical components like design and implementation. Experiences such as the one described by Harlow portray the power of unity when coaches join teachers in professional learning to enhance their knowledge, skills, and ideas.

In summary, this finding aimed to understand participants' perceptions of learning within a community. As mentioned, their involvement with other ICs and instructors during coach PLC and teacher professional learning was beneficial: it developed their knowledge and practices as curriculum leaders. In conclusion, coaches have the skills to shape systemic curricular initiatives that impact teacher growth and student achievement.

Chapter Summary

The findings presented in this chapter aimed to answer the research questions about ICs' perceived professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership, coaching knowledge, and practices. After applying the conceptual framework, which included the curriculum and professional development models, three relevant findings emerged from the interviews, artifacts, and researcher's journal data: learning in fragments, learning outside the district, and learning within a community. The final chapter includes recommendations and implications for school leaders and district administrators who offer professional learning opportunities to coaches.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In K-12 education, ICs will always resemble the role of film directors who ensure the accuracy of curriculum and instruction within an educational set. Nonetheless, the findings of this study added to this metaphorical depiction by spotlighting an angle that is seldom portrayed: coaches' perceptions of curriculum leadership development. Rather than reinforcing their responsibilities in curricular coaching, the results delved deeper into the who, what, and how of their professional learning, which impacted their development and daily performance.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore ICs' perceptions of their professional learning related to curriculum development and leadership. Three findings were identified: (a) learning in fragments, (b) learning outside the district, and (c) learning within a community. In this chapter, I discuss the findings and then make recommendations for future research, policies, and practice. Lastly, I conclude with a summary of my final reflections.

Discussion of the Findings

The discussion below analyzes the findings while weaving connections to the existing literature. First, I unpack the consequences of coaches' fragmented district-professional learning, which hinders their practices at the campus level. Next, I explain the significance of ICs' access to opportunities outside the district, which is imperative for elevating their curriculum coaching knowledge. Finally, I discuss how coaches must have access to a community to improve high-quality instructional practices that impact curricular initiatives across the school district.

Learning in Fragments

Based on the themes in this finding, ICs' curriculum leadership development that occurs during district professional learning is fragmented and lacks the necessary intentionality to

impact daily coaching practices. This aligns with the existing literature that coaches are seldom asked to engage in curriculum leadership tasks, most of which occur at the district level (Anselmo et al., 2021; Erbeli et al., 2020; Galey-Horn & Wouflin, 2021; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Polikoff et al., 2020; Piper, 2018; Shinno & Mizoguchi, 2021). Case in point, Galey-Horn and Wouflin (2021) found that ICs are instrumental in assisting district leaders in creating curricular frameworks and unit plans. Meanwhile, Polikoff et al. (2020) discovered that coaches are invited to evaluate the curriculum during textbook adoption meetings. Both findings from the studies above reveal that ICs are applying knowledge and skills from their curriculum coaching development; however, it is within the context of special projects that occur at the district level. Although scholars contend that coaches are curriculum leaders at their campus (Knight, 2007; Spaulding & Smith, 2012; Woulfin et al., 2023), the findings of this study challenge the existing literature considering that ICs' learning of curriculum leadership is more fragmented than comprehensive. Hence, they may lack the capacity to support teachers in design, implementation, and evaluation simultaneously. Instead, coaches' PLC and job-embedded coaching emphasize one component at a time, like creating lesson plans (Hubbard et al., 2020; Lesley et al., 2020). The reality of ICs' district development is detrimental to coaching outcomes within any campus, as coaches could inadvertently build routines around design, disregarding the application and assessment of curricular initiatives and programs. Thus, there is a need to reconstruct ICs' professional learning for curriculum leadership that is not fragmented but targeted and intentional to the daily responsibilities of all campus coaches.

Furthermore, this finding highlights how district administrators contribute to the fragmented curriculum coaching development that ICs experience. This claim correlates with the existing literature that district leaders facilitate coaches' professional learning yet never

customize it to fit the coaching perspective (Stornaiuolo et al., 2023; Xia et al., 2019). Even when curriculum companies are invited into the district, administrators do not provide guidelines for professional learning, let alone the requirement to merge design, implementation, and evaluation (Calo et al., 2014; Galey-Horn, 2020. Consequently, coaches perceive their curriculum leadership development as deficient in meaning, relevance, and practicality to their working context, which the study participants named. Thus, ICs may waste their time in district training that is not conducive to their curriculum coaching knowledge and practices. Circumstances such as this not only jeopardize the integrity of district-professional learning but threaten the alignment of curricular expectations between administrators and coaches. If unaddressed, ICs will continue to endure fragmented curriculum leadership development that impedes high-quality instruction and hinders academic achievement. Further, coaches will look elsewhere to supplement their opportunities for professional learning.

Learning Outside the District

The themes in this finding served a purpose in demystifying how coaches grasp curriculum leadership beyond the school district. While the majority of previous research expounds on coaches' confinement to district training (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018; Siler & Kogut, 2019; Xia et al., 2019), this finding challenged the literature in illuminating how ICs leveraged their learning experiences. For instance, researchers like Xia et al. (2019) contended that district administrators manage coaches' professional learning; however, the participants of this study took autonomy in extending their curriculum leadership development past the expertise of central office leaders. Namely, the participants sought supplemental training from individuals who led national conferences, regional service centers, and established curriculum companies. While the benefits of varying who leads coaches' professional learning are not aligned with previous

studies, this theme serves a purpose by stamping the importance: it diversifies the voices that ICs have access to beyond the context of their school district. Significantly, coaches are gaining tips and techniques that are not targeted to their campus but are relevant to research-based practices that improve the quality of teaching and learning for any K-12 classroom. Therefore, district administrators and campus principals should encourage ICs to remain proactive in pursuing extended professional learning, especially when the training is hosted by experts they admire and aim to emulate in their daily curriculum coaching.

Although the literature is minimal, past scholars have also limited coaches outside curriculum leadership development to workshops (Hubbard et al., 2020; Lesley et al., 2020). Specifically, Hubbard et al. (2020) asserted that some coaches attend workshops or interactive sessions outside of the school district when engaging in professional learning for curriculum design, such as crafting unit plans for multiple academic subjects. Contrarily, this study detailed how coaches learned comprehensive curriculum leadership outside the district - ICs immersed themselves in various learning methods. Remarkably, they sought professional learning that developed their knowledge and skills through simulated coaching sessions, online modules, book studies, and podcasts. As a result, coaches grew more comfortable comprehending curriculum leadership's components because their training mirrored their learning styles.

Furthermore, access to various outside opportunities helped participants close professional learning gaps at the district level and hindered their comprehension of design, implementation, and evaluation as a cyclical process. Without this exposure, ICs would remain accustomed to workshops or sedentary sessions for their curriculum leadership development. Supervisors of coaches at the district and campus levels must recognize the detriment of stagnant professional learning styles, which would eventually manifest in coaches' support during teacher

PLC and job-embedded coaching. Findings such as this add to the existing literature and present substantial evidence to support the claim that coaches need opportunities outside the district to elevate and enhance their practices, even if their development occurs within a community of other coaches.

Learning Within a Community

Alongside taking advantage of professional learning beyond the district, participants of this study expressed value in learning with a community of people, namely other ICs. Upon reading the existing literature, one may assume that coaches are only involved in teacher PLC (Keijzer, 2020; Shim & Thompson, 2021; Zhang et al., 2016); however, this finding is significant in conveying their curriculum leadership development during coach PLC. According to the participants of this study, coach PLC cultivated a space for networking, exchanging strategies, and providing feedback on practices that advanced their curriculum leadership (Galley-Horn, 2020; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015; Woulfin, 2018; Woulfin et al., 2023). Hence, most campus ICs desire access to coaching PLCs, especially those seeking mentorship and guidance to improve their craft (Bean et al., 2015). Despite these benefits, it must be noted that the vitality of coach PLC is contingent upon the efforts of school leaders at the country, regional, and district levels. If these individuals fail to arrange coach PLC, the responsibility is left to ICs, which the participants of this study depicted.

Nonetheless, coordinating such efforts will steal valuable time from coaches, who are already given many administrative and pedagogical responsibilities outside their curriculum leadership (Huguet et al., 2014; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Piper, 2018; Walkowiak, 2016). Considering the circumstances, assistance is needed from stakeholders who can create, manage, and maintain coach PLC that is available for all ICs. Not having access to this community is the

equivalent of withholding tools and techniques from coaches that promote high-quality instruction and reinforce strategies for curriculum leadership across every school.

Similar to coach PLC, participants of this study immersed themselves in similar communities alongside teachers to elevate their curriculum coaching knowledge and skills. Although the findings portray ICs' presence during teacher professional learning, they question the existing literature that depicts instructors as the sole participants of such training (Kimura et al., 2022; Ratnam-Lim, 2017; Shilon & Schechter, 2017; Tahir et al., 2023). Very seldom are coaches featured in the results drawn by previous scholars, which makes this finding unique and relevant to the field. To expound, the participants of this study perceived attending teacher training as twofold: it was a chance to extend their knowledge while building relationships with their teachers. Given the array of research that affirms the importance of positive relationships between ICs and teachers (Knight, 2007; Walkowiak, 2016), it is beneficial for coaches to attend teacher training to supplement their curriculum coaching skills while learning alongside the individuals they support daily. The same is true for ICs' participation in other forms of teacher professional learning, like book studies, which is not prevalent in the literature (Kimura et al., 2022) but is mentioned in the findings of this study. Collectively, the combination of teacher and coach communities are vehicles for coaches' growth and success as curriculum leaders. Still, they need the backing of their supervisors to support them in their professional learning endeavors, which ultimately impact systemic curricular improvements across K-12 school districts.

Ultimately, this study helped to pronounce the consequences of ICs' fragmented district-professional learning, the significance of their access to opportunities outside the district, and the importance of coaching communities for guidance and support of curricular initiatives. Initially,

this study magnified the problem that coaches were recognized as curriculum leaders yet had minimal training in curriculum leadership development (Galey-Horn, 2020; Kane & Rosenquist, 2019; Polikoff et al., 2020). Upon conducting this study, the findings revealed that coaches have access to professional learning opportunities for curriculum coaching; however, the greater issue entails who is influencing their development, what they are learning, and how the content applies to their tasks as school leaders. Thus, the problem persists in ICs' understanding of curriculum leadership, which is not comprehensive or conducive to daily coaching at the campus level. The following section provides solutions with implications for improved curriculum leadership development for coaches of K-12 schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the sections below include recommendations for future research, policies, and practice. These suggestions will help enhance readers' understanding of coaches' curriculum leadership development by adding nuance to the design, methodology, and participant selection. Further, it provides insight for policymakers, district leaders, and school administrators who help to shape coaches' professional learning experiences.

Future Research Recommendations

The following paragraphs include recommendations for future research, such as methodologies and participant selection. I provide a rationale for each suggestion to enhance forthcoming studies about ICs' curriculum leadership development.

Research Methods

While the data from this study were derived from semi-structured interviews, artifacts, and a researcher's journal, future research should consider capturing coaches' perspectives through focus groups and observational studies. The findings from this study were captured

individually to promote closeness and transparency among participants; however, the facilitation of a focus group would have captured the phenomenon among participants simultaneously. Moreover, utilizing focus groups will contribute to the existing literature by providing qualitative yet quantifiable findings that validate coaches' shared experiences in curriculum leadership development. On the other hand, conducting observational studies will allow researchers to document a first-hand account of coaches' curriculum leadership development, which was missing from this study. Hence, no evidence vividly illustrated participants' accounts of their curriculum leadership development outside the verbal depictions provided. Therefore, adding observations to the study will enrich the existing literature by portraying the unknown details and conditions that shape coaches' experiences.

Participant Selection

The findings from this study were diverse as participants from various states were featured, yet the evidence of their curriculum leadership was more broad than specific. Considering this aspect of the study, future research may delimit the participant selection criteria to ICs in one state, region, or school district. Doing so will contribute to the existing literature by highlighting how local policies and state standards directly impact coaches' curriculum leadership development. Outside of ICs, researchers could build upon the findings of this study by exploring how district leaders and campus principals perceive their support in developing coaches' curriculum leadership. Beyond providing professional learning, it remains unknown how district leaders assist coaches in their curricular knowledge and practices throughout the school year. Likewise, it is unclear how campus principals invest in coaches' development within or outside the school. Still, the professional development model, along with the findings of this study, confirms that organizational structures impact training, such as ICs (Buysse et al.,

2009). Therefore, capturing the voices of their supervisors will close the gap between what coaches experience and how they are supported during the ongoing process of their professional learning.

Policy Recommendations

The findings presented in this study lend recommendations for policies at the state and local levels that will influence equitable experiences for coaches' professional learning. While the current federal law, Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), outlines ICs' responsibilities in supporting teachers with pedagogical strategies, it excludes training as a requirement for coaches. Thus, states and school districts are given the autonomy to decide how ICs are developed, whether on or off campus. Consequently, coaches are not privy to comprehensive curriculum leadership development that consistently provides stimulating, hands-on experiences, as seen in the results of this study.

Upon considering policy recommendations, prospective rules and regulations for ICs' professional learning will level the playing field for curriculum leadership development. I recommend a policy modeled after Vermont's educator licensing requirements, which require pre-approved professional learning for all educators, including coaches (Agency of Education, n.d.). Moreover, Vermont provides ICs with access to a regional professional learning network, which offers ongoing training for instructional coaching for ICs who support all subjects and grade levels in K-12 schools (Agency of Education, n.d.). Implementing such policies for coaches will standardize professional learning requirements that are not limited to coaches' experience or expertise, which was mentioned in the findings of this study. Thus, ICs will have the capacity to support teachers of any subject or grade level. Further, a state policy will serve as

an example for school districts in creating guidelines for coaches' participation in training on or off campus.

Upon developing a state policy, legislatures should consider creating a committee to assist in the outlining of rules and regulations. Namely, members would include ICs, curriculum specialists, district leaders, and campus administrators, all of whom directly impact coaches' professional learning. Moreover, this committee should maintain the responsibility of meeting annually to make necessary amendments that improve ICs' curriculum coaching development.

Practice Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, the following paragraphs provide practice recommendations for ICs, campus principals, district leaders, and education service centers.

Instructional Coaches (ICs)

The evidence from this study contributed to potential solutions for ICs who engage in professional learning within a K-12 school district. As revealed in the findings, coaches were passive in their curriculum leadership development, which mainly highlighted the expertise of district administrators. To prevent a lack of collaboration, ICs should partner with district leaders to develop professional learning that simultaneously presents design, implementation, and evaluation. Based on participants' experiences in this study, coaches can contribute their knowledge of curriculum leadership derived from outside training, communities, and resources. Further, ICs, in addition to administrators, should advocate for attending professional learning outside of the district. As mentioned in the previous chapter, off-campus coach development increases opportunities to understand comprehensive curriculum leadership, whether independently or in a community of other coaches. Finally, coaches should request resources

from campus principals or district leaders to build their professional expertise as coaches and campus curriculum leaders.

Campus Principals

Although campus principals were not mentioned in this study, they indirectly impacted the development of ICs. According to the findings, coaches engaged in professional learning at the campus level, such as teacher professional learning, that further enhanced their knowledge and practices. Thus, principals should continue to provide opportunities to coaches, whether on or off campus, that promote the mastery of skills for curriculum leadership. In doing so, coaches will be given the tools and techniques to help principals achieve student success and teacher growth in every classroom. Further, principals should meet with coaches to ensure they have access to professional resources, such as books and online programs, that help close learning gaps in their curriculum development. As confirmed by the participants of this study, ICs often seek training, literature, and podcasts to supplement their district-professional learning. Contrarily, if principals invest in coaches' resources, there will be alignment and equity in the information shared with teachers during job-embedded coaching, PLC, and book studies that occur daily within the school.

District Leaders

Out of the many educational stakeholders, district leaders were mentioned by the participants of this study as a direct influence on their curriculum leadership development. Within the findings, ample evidence confirmed that these administrators delivered and fragmented coaches' understanding of curriculum leadership. Thus, district administrators should seek feedback from ICs to implement improvements for professional learning that implement design, implementation, and evaluation simultaneously implement design, implementation, and

evaluation. Doing so will give coaches a voice in their development and eliminate the learning gaps they experience during their training. Lastly, like campus principals, district leaders should finance tangible or online resources contributing to coaches' curriculum leadership development. Although participants of this study were proactive in extending professional learning opportunities, no evidence supported the alignment of their newfound information across the school district. If resources are invested at the district level, coaches will share the same knowledge and practices of curriculum leadership, resulting in systemic improvements at every campus.

Education Service Centers

As evidenced by the existing literature, ICs are not privy to preparation programs that build their curriculum coaching. Instead, they attend district training that often fragments their curriculum leadership development and minimizes practical connections to the coaching role. Although the findings of this study confirmed that some ICs have access to regional service centers for coach PLC, there needs to be evidence to confirm whether or not coaches have access to preparation opportunities at education service centers in each state. If these centers offered sessions to prepare ICs for curriculum leadership, coaches would have access to professional learning, networks, and resources aligned with their state curriculum. Moreover, ICs would have the chance to make connections to design, implementation, and evaluation simultaneously while following the guidance of a certified curriculum expert. Doing so would provide coaches with hands-on practice and official training credits to certify their knowledge and skills as curriculum leaders, which is necessary for their professional growth and contribution to campus improvement.

Conclusion

In summary, this study explored ICs' perceptions of their professional learning related to curriculum development and leadership. The conceptual framework, which included the Saylor et al. (1981) curriculum development model and the Buysse et al. (2009) professional development model, revealed that coaches are learning curriculum leadership in fragments outside of the district and within a community. Whereas previous literature helped to emphasize ICs' training in pedagogical practices, the results of this study served to enlighten school leaders on how coaches perceive their curriculum leadership development. Hence, the findings eliminated the assumption that ICs are uninformed of these practices yet illuminated the factors contributing to their experiences beyond the campus.

Throughout the findings, participants voiced a unique perspective on their curriculum coaching development, which was seldom a comprehensive training. Instead, they were exposed to components like design, implementation, and evaluation at various points of their professional learning - some of which needed to be personalized for ICs. Consequently, this caused learning gaps for coaches and led to their pursuit of external resources, outside training, and professional communities. As mentioned in the discussion, access to these opportunities yields mentorship and support, ultimately improving coaches' practices. Nonetheless, ICs must have continuous support from supervisors to expand their understanding of curriculum leadership - the cornerstone of effective classroom instruction. Without this investment, coaches will lack competency in guiding teachers in curricular initiatives, resources, and decisions that impact student outcomes.

The key takeaway of this study is that ICs' curriculum coaching is heavily influenced by the who, what, and how of their development. Suppose coaches are expected to operate as campus directors of teaching and learning. In that case, they must have sufficient knowledge,

practice, and tools for the task, as depending on district training will not suffice for their success. Therefore, ICs must have a pathway for professional learning that is intentional and aligned with their impact as curriculum leaders who ultimately set the stage for effective instruction across K-12 schools.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol 1

Date: _____

Time & Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Pre-Interview Information & Procedures

Introduction: Greetings. My name is Cora Garner and I will lead today's interview. Thank you for agreeing to participate. The purpose of our discussion today is to understand your experiences in curriculum leadership development. This interview will last roughly 45-60 minutes.

Purpose of the Interview: The purpose of this interview is to hear about your experience with professional learning opportunities for curriculum leadership. You may share personal stories, insights, reactions to, and interpretations of those experiences.

Treatment of the Data: Please be advised that your responses during this interview will remain confidential. The information collected during this research will be maintained via UTA's Microsoft OneDrive to ensure the safety, privacy, and confidentiality of the data. After a retention period of five years, in adherence to research ethical standards, all data will be permanently disposed of to ensure the continued privacy and protection of participants' information.

Other Questions or Concerns: Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Yes: _____ No: _____

Comments: _____

Consent & Approval: With your permission, I would like to record this interview to ensure I capture your responses accurately. May I begin the recording?

Yes: _____ No: _____

General Questions:

1. What led you to instructional coaching?
2. How would you describe ICs' role in curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation?
3. As a participant in professional learning, what was your experience with opportunities in curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation?
4. Can you describe what was covered during your professional learning and who provided the training opportunities?
5. What were the strengths and weaknesses of your professional learning focused on curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with professional learning opportunities for curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation?
7. Are there any final comments you would share regarding today's topic?

Thank You & Follow-Up Reminder

Thank you for your time and insights. During the second interview, we will discuss how you describe the development of your curriculum coaching knowledge and practices. To prepare for this discussion, you will complete three online journal prompts as a reflection tool. Engaging in this exercise will help you to recall and record the experience in your own words. You may type your reflections as open-ended, unstructured responses, which can include illustrations and symbols to express your feelings about the phenomenon further. Please bring your reflection to the next interview, which will occur in two weeks.

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol 2

Date: _____

Time & Place: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Pre-Interview Information & Procedures

Introduction: Thank you for making time for today's follow-up interview. This session will last roughly 45-60 minutes.

Purpose of the Interview: The purpose of this interview is to hear about the development of your curriculum coaching knowledge and practices. You may share personal stories, insights, reactions to, and interpretations of those experiences.

Treatment of the Data: Please be advised that your responses during this interview will remain confidential. The information collected during this research will be maintained via UTA's Microsoft OneDrive to ensure the safety, privacy, and confidentiality of the data. After a retention period of five years, in adherence to research ethical standards, all data will be permanently disposed of to ensure the continued privacy and protection of participants' information.

Other Questions or Concerns: Do you have any questions or concerns before we proceed to the member-checking exercise?

Yes: _____ No: _____

Comments: _____

Consent & Approval: For accurate representation and to ensure no detail is overlooked, I'd like to record our conversation. Are you comfortable if I begin the recording now?

Yes: _____ No: _____

General Questions:

1. Tell me about the reflection you brought that informs your development with curriculum coaching knowledge and practices.
2. Describe the development of your curriculum coaching knowledge and practices. Also, what role does professional learning play in this development?
3. Tell me about your coaching beliefs and practices in supporting teachers with curriculum.
4. Given your experiences, what should be included in curriculum leadership development for ICs? Please explain why.
5. When should this professional learning occur for coaches and who should be responsible for organizing and leading it? Please explain why.
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?

Thank You

Thank you for contributing your insights to the study.

APPENDIX C

A Priori Coding Table

Table 1: The following a priori codes were developed according to the components of the conceptual framework used for this study: the Curriculum Development Model (Saylor et al., 1981) and the Professional Development (PD) Model (Buysse et al., 2009).

Framework	A Priori Code	Definition	Example
Curriculum Development Model	Goals	This term refers to quantifiable outcomes for students in a specific subject and grade level.	The interviewee recalls composing quantifiable outcomes for the organization/campus.
	Objectives	This term indicates measurable statements defining instructional expectations and student strategies.	The interviewee reflects on crafting expectations for teaching and learning according to local, state, or national educational standards.
	Curriculum Design	The process of structuring information centered on the subject, student, or society	The interviewee describes the creation of scope and sequence for academic content (lessons, activities, and assessments) that align with the established goals and objectives.
	Curriculum Implementation	The act of overseeing the application of curriculum in classrooms across the campus.	The interviewee outlines strategic planning and decision-making (e.g., the development of timelines to accomplish and execute curricular initiatives across the campus.)
	Curriculum Evaluation	The process of gathering and interpreting data to determine whether or not learning objectives were mastered by students.	The interviewee reflects on numerical data from curricular resources or feedback received from stakeholders, such as teachers, students, and parents about the curriculum.
	External Forces	Factors determined outside of the organization: federal	The interviewee names policies and or best practices that

		legislation, regional requirements, professional organizations, and scholarly research.	influence the curriculum development process.
	Bases of Curriculum	The main characteristics of the curriculum: society, learners, and knowledge.	The interviewee describes factors considered when customizing educational experiences for students of various subjects and grade levels.
Framework	**A Priori Code**	**Definition**	**Example**
Professional Development (PD) Model	Who	Contexts and characteristics of learners who attend PD.	The interviewee confirms he/she is the participant of the PD for the researched phenomenon.
	What	The content or information discussed or distributed to participants during training.	The interviewee describes information learned for curriculum leadership development (i.e., learning objectives, curriculum design, curriculum implementation, and curriculum evaluation).
	How	Modes of PD (e.g., workshops, simulated practice, curriculum plans, coursework, and online resources).	The interviewee details the approach used during coach training for curriculum leadership.
	Resources	Materials used for professional learning (e.g., books, excerpts, artifacts, manipulatives, and or online sources).	The interviewee names curricular resources and or instructional resources used during the PD.
	Policies	Federal, state, or local legislation that determines the guidelines for PD.	The interviewee refers to state or district policies, including state curricular standards or frameworks, referred to or applied during the PD.

	Organizational Structures	The hierarchy of leadership impacts the selection of participants for professional learning.	The interviewee describes how their role in the organization impacted their participation in PD.
	Access	Equal opportunities to professional learning opportunities on or off campus.	The interviewee expresses his/her experience with access to training for curriculum leadership development.
	Outreach	Activities or initiatives that promote PD.	The interviewee names outreach efforts that influenced their access to curriculum leadership training.
	Evaluation	An assessment to determine overall performance and effectiveness.	The interviewee explains how their evaluation influenced their participation in PD.