The role of coaching in primary school teachers' improved practice

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MEdL

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Abstract

In New Zealand schools, effective teacher practice is identified as a critical component in ensuring that students achieve their potential (Ministry of Education, 2007). An increasingly popular approach school leaders use to improve teacher practice is the use of coaching to encourage teachers to reflect and refine areas of their professional practice. Although the use of coaching can create efficient systems for improving the practice and pedagogy of teachers, the purpose of this research is to explore, critically examine and understand how coaching achieves improved primary school teachers' practices. Furthermore, this research is concerned with understanding and examining the ways educational leaders use coaching to influence and improve teachers' practice. It also seeks to identify and understand primary school teachers perspectives as to how coaching has benefitted their practice. Four research questions that guided this study were:

- How do educational leaders resource coaching?
- How do educational leaders give coaching the best chance of working?
- In what ways do teachers perceive that coaching has affected their teaching practice?
- What are the perceived enablers and barriers to effective coaching?

A qualitative approach was utilised for this study. Eight educators (principals, deputy principals and teachers) from two Auckland primary schools similar to my own participated in semi-structured interviews. Using an interpretive approach, the findings of this research were analysed. This research is important because it highlighted the actions school leaders can take to improve the likelihood of coaching having the desired effect for improving teacher practice. The data revealed three major themes i) the tangible factors that affect coaching; ii) coaching as a strategic function designed to achieve transformational change for an organisation; and iii) the interpersonal behaviours that result in coaching having an impact on teacher practice.

A number of recommendations arose from this research, in particular the need for school leaders to understand the multiple factors impacting on effective coaching environments that are required for coaching to have the desired effect of improving

teacher practice. Coaching models can support the compliance driven accountability measures of a school's strategic initiatives when leaders include teachers in the decision making processes. When coaching practices are appropriately resourced throughout all professional interactions and engagements, coaching models can support the practices of reflection, productive dialogue and teacher improvement.

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Table of Contents

Abstract……i
Acknowledgements……iii
List of tables and figures……vi
Chapter One: Introduction…….... 1
Rationale……..1
A personal and professional perspective……1
Research aims and questions……..2
Thesis organisation…… 3
Chapter Two: Literature review…….. 4
Coaching defined……4
Coaching models and learning theories…… 5
Skill and expertise of the coach……8
The role of school leaders in developing organisation culture and environment. 12
Key coachee characteristics…… 17
Summary……..19
Chapter Three: Research methodology and methods…….. 20
Research design……20
The qualitative approach……...21
Data collection……26
Summary……..35
Chapter Four: Presentation of findings……..…….. 37
Findings……37
Summary……..64
Chapter Five: Discussion of findings…… 65
The tangible factors that affect the quality and impact of coaching……66
Coaching as a strategic function designed to achieve transformational change for an organisation…….. 70
The interpersonal behaviours that affect coaching having an impact on teacher practice…… 74
Summary……..79
Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations……..81
An overview of the research study…….. 81

Conclusions…….…….. 81
Strengths and limitations of the research study…… 83
Recommendations…… 84
Final conclusion……..85
References……...86
Appendix A – Principal letter - Permission to conduct research..…….. 91
Appendix B – Principal's permission for access to the school..……..... 92
Appendix C – Participant information sheet…….…… 93
Appendix D – Indicative interview questions..……....96
Appendix E – Consent form……..... 97

List of tables and figures

Table 4.1 Leaders' descriptions of coaching used in schools 38
Table 4.2: Leaders' descriptions of coaching implementation 40
Table 4.3 Leaders' descriptions of how well coaching is working in their school 43
Table 4.4 Leaders' descriptions of formal evaluation of coaching 45
Table 4.5 Leaders' observations of coaching effect in their schools 47
Table 4.6 Leaders' and teachers' comments on how coaching has affected their practice 49
Table 4.7 Perceived benefits to students 52
Table 4.8 Changes leaders would make to improve coaching 56
Table 4.9 Teachers' perceptions of coaching used in school 57
Table 4.10 Teachers' descriptions of how leaders support coaching 58
Table 4.11 Teachers' experiences of coaching 60
Table 4.12 Difficulties faced by teachers 61
Table 4.13 Teachers' ideas on ways to enhance coaching model in school 62

List of figures

Table 5.1 Leadership modelling and leading the change 70

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Name: Michael Earl

Signed:

Chapter One: Introduction

Coaching provides a platform for professional dialogue to occur between a coach and a coachee that aims to encourage the coachee to understand their reality and identify goals for them to work toward. Coaching also provides a platform for teachers to use to refine their pedagogy and practice in an ongoing way using a teaching as inquiry approach (Ministry of Education, 2007). Therefore, it is important that school leaders implement effective coaching practices in primary school environments as part of their leadership practice. It is important to understand why school leaders choose a particular coaching model and also how the coaching is offered to improve the coachees' professional practice. Whilst there is significant international literature that addresses how coaching is used in educational contexts, there is little that is specific to the New Zealand primary school environment.

Rationale

The rationale for my research has stemmed from the following factors. As a senior leader in a primary school I aspire to support teachers to continually perform to the best of their ability. A core component of this links with the *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) that requires teachers to use a *teaching as inquiry* approach to refine and develop the ways that they teach in the class. A further factor has been the use of coaching in my current school as a way of achieving these aims. As a result of my experiences acting as a coach I am interested in understanding and comparing approaches from others to see how they use coaching and the effect that it has had on teachers' practice.

A personal and professional perspective

While my personal perspective is the main reason for conducting this study there is sufficient information and guidance from Ministry of Education documents that encourage the use of coaching as a means of improving personal and organisational performance. However, most of the literature regarding coaching in education contexts has arisen from outside New Zealand. As a result of the literature review I discovered a lack of research on how coaching improves primary school teacher practice in Aotearoa. The *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) identifies the critical place

of the teacher inquiring into their own practice and coaching is a way of encouraging this to happen.

Whilst my personal rationale is the driving force behind conducting my research, I believe that I have a moral obligation to understand and do everything that I can to support teachers to improve their practice. It is their practice that has the greatest impact on accelerating the academic and social achievement of the learners in our school. Furthermore, as a school leader it is my responsibility to my colleagues to provide support to them to help refine their practice. Coaching when paired with professional development is identified as being incredibly effective in supporting teachers to make refinements to their practice and encourages them to implement and sustain new teaching practices more effectively (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Therefore the purpose of this research is to explore the role of coaching in improved primary school teachers' practice.

Research aims and questions

The aims of this study are:

1. To identify the coaching models that primary schools use to inform and guide coaching practice;
2. To identify and critically examine how school leaders understand the ways that coaches influence teachers to improve their practice;
3. To identify and critically examine primary school teachers' views on the effects, both positive and negative, that coaching has had on improving their practice; and
4. To identify and critically examine the enablers and barriers to effective coaching occurring in primary schools

The research questions are:

1. How do educational leaders resource coaching?
2. How do educational leaders give coaching the best chance of working?
3. In what ways do teachers perceive that coaching has affected their teaching practice?
4. What are the perceived enablers and barriers to effective coaching?

Thesis organisation

This thesis is set out in six chapters.

Chapter One

Chapter one is an introduction to the research study. It describes the rationale for the study and lists research aims and questions that guided the aims.

Chapter Two

Chapter two presents a literature review that examines existing literature and research in the research area. Definitions of coaching, effective appraisal systems and practices, and use of digital tools and platforms in teacher appraisal are the basis of the literature review.

Chapter Three

Chapter three explains the rationale in selecting a qualitative methodology and the data collection method of the semi-structured interview. The data analysis procedures used, aspects of validity, reliability and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter Four

Chapter four presents the research findings from the semi-structured interviews. Emerging themes from the data collection are identified.

Chapter Five

Chapter five presents a discussion of findings based on the emerging themes. The key findings of the research study are critically examined and connected to the literature reviewed in chapter two.

Chapter Six

Chapter six completes the thesis with a summary of overall findings of the research study. The strengths and limitations of the study are discussed. The final recommendations for future appraisal practice and possibilities for further research complete this chapter.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter reviews literature relating to the focus of this thesis – the role of coaching in primary school teachers' improved practice. The search for literature revealed relevant international publications focused on coaching; however, I could locate very little relevant literature from the New Zealand context. This chapter begins by defining coaching and then discusses the main themes that have emerged. These themes are: the learning theory that underpins coaching models; the models of coaching used in schools; the skill of the coach in the partnership; the role of school leaders in developing the organisational culture and environment to support coaching; and key coachee characteristics. Within each theme there are a number of clear sub-themes and contrasting viewpoints that are analysed and evaluated. This chapter concludes by using the literature review to support the focus of this thesis study - the role of coaching in primary school teachers' improved practice.

Coaching defined

The literature defines coaching as a short to mid-term relationship between a coach and a coachee (Bozer, Sarros, & Santora, 2013; Ng, 2012). Ng (2012) describes that the coach is typically a person who supports and guides the coachee by aiding them to reflect in specific areas. Further characteristics of effective coaching are identified in the literature as being those partnerships where coach and coachee engage in effective dialogue that provides self-reflection and analysis, from which the coachee makes changes to specific areas that enhance their teaching and maximise their performance (Lofthouse, Leat, Towler, Hall, & Cummings, 2010; Veenman & Denessen, 2001; Whitmore, 2009).

One noteworthy goal that was evident across a range of literature was that the purpose of any type of coaching was to enhance professional development and assist teachers to reflect on, develop and refine their practice (Ellington, Whitenack, & Edwards, 2017; Lu, 2010; Passmore, 2006). A key characteristic in this type of relationship is its intention that the coach and coachee both have equal power in the relationship (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). The seminal work of Showers and Joyce (1996) posits that coaching in education fosters collaborative teaching communities,

advances teacher purpose and practice, and builds the norms essential for continued teacher improvement. Similarly, van Nieuwerburgh (2012) states that such relationships need a non-directive coaching approach, as it is through vicarious experiences such as reflecting on video of their teaching or feedback from students, that the coachee can achieve this professional growth. Therefore, coaching can best be defined as a relationship between the coach and the coachee that aims to foster greater levels of self-reflection and encourages the coachee to refine and improve their teaching practice and potential that maximises their performance.

Coaching models and learning theories involved

In terms of the process of coaching it is important to understand how coaching models work and the learning theories involved. The process that many coaching models use can be generally defined as being fixed in nature (Collet, 2015). This is certainly evident in the models that have been explored which demonstrate a structured approach to coaching interactions (Collet, 2015; Palmer, 2008; Whitmore, 2009). This move towards a structured coaching model was developed through the work of Downey (2003) who believed that successful interactions between the coach and coachee involved certain stages being covered, albeit not necessarily in a linear way. It was from Downey's research that models like the Goal, Reality, Options and Wrap-up [GROW] model (Whitmore, 2009) was developed. Prior to these models, Downey (2003), found that coaches took an intuitive or non-directive approach but recognised over time that successful coaching sessions involved certain stages being covered. The GROW model (Whitmore, 2009) provides a relatively simple framework to ensure that the key stages are covered by a coach although the stages do not have to be covered in a linear way. Furthermore, this model ensures that conversations are focused and efficient.

Other coaching models used in education include: The Problem, Realistic, Alternative, Consideration, Target, Implementation, Chosen solution, and Evaluation [PRACTICE] model (Palmer, 2008); and an alternative to the GROW model used by Growth Coaching International which includes the letters T and H into the Goal, Reality, Options, Will, Tactics and Habits [GROWTH] model (Growth Coaching). These models provide a structured framework that allow coaches to ensure

coverage of the areas required, whilst dealing with constraints such as the time and location of the coaching. However, such models are critiqued because of their fixed or static nature that can result in overly structured coaching sessions (Collet, 2015; Salomaa, 2015). In addition, a negative consequence of coaching sessions being so fixed and structured is that coaches who strictly follow the framework of the model do not adjust their practice to suit the needs of the coachee (Hibbert, Heydon, & Rich, 2008; MacGillivray, Ardell, Sauceda Curwen, & Palma, 2004).

Another important aspect described in the literature, is that of the different ways that coaching is organised (Cornett & Knight, 2008; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). These include: peer coaching, expert coaching, cognitive coaching, team coaching and literacy coaching. Peer coaching (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Lu, 2010) can be divided into two main areas: expert coaching and reciprocal coaching. Expert coaching is defined as a teacher with more expertise providing support for a teacher with less expertise, whilst reciprocal coaching involves peers with similar levels of experience working together (Lu, 2010). Peer coaching tends to be used more in primary schools because primary school teachers are responsible for teaching all subjects, need to be more flexible with their time schedule and often have a greater willingness to share their practice (Lu, 2010). The literature suggests that the benefits of peer coaching for the coachee include being able to implement new learning into their practice as well having a greater focus on their teaching whilst ensuring an improved knowledge transfer for students (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Lu, 2010). Although there are clear merits in using a peer coaching approach, the literature also highlights disadvantages associated with the timing of conversations; coaches who lack skill and experience and the ability of the coachee to collaborate and reflect (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Ellington et al., 2017; Lu, 2010; Passmore, 2006).

As well as understanding the coaching models and the different types of coaching approaches, it is important to recognise the learning theories that underpin coaching. A behaviourist tradition is particularly evident in the structured nature of the different coaching models (Passmore, 2006; Peel, 2005). This behaviourist approach requires the coach to follow the key elements of the chosen coaching model. However, using

such an approach ignores aspects of cognition that shape and influence the coachee to make changes to their practice. This can be attributed to the coach adhering to the model so closely that they are not attuned to the coachee (Cox, 2015; Passmore, 2006). Furthermore, using a coaching model by itself is effectively "using only half the evidence of what we understand works in helping people to change and develop" (Passmore, 2006, p. 28). Therefore, a structured coaching model should be considered as only one part, or the starting point, in developing coaching relationships and that a mix of structured and unstructured time is an indicator of how coaching can be effective in improving the coachee's practice. In addition to this behaviourist approach are the adult learning theories that are inherent in coaching approaches.

Having reviewed a range of coaching models it is apparent that all apply adult learning theories. Coaching models tend to utilise the principles of adult learning to support teachers only when they are ready to make changes to their practice (Cox, 2015; Mezirow, 2000). When teachers face a crisis or seek support these are described as disorienting dilemmas. Until an adult is faced with such a dilemma they are unlikely to want to change or even engage with a coach to find their way forward (Flaherty, 2010; Mezirow, 2000). Therefore, it can be reasoned that adults are more open to engaging in a coaching relationship when they are seeking solutions to a problem they face. Coaching models, such as the GROW and GROWTH models (Whitmore, 2009), reflect the need for the coachee to work to understand immediate problems (Cox, 2015). Using the GROW model to consider adult learning theories at work, the coach helps the coachee to set the *goal* for the session. This goal is specifically what the coachee wants to achieve and which, ideally, has been identified as a result of the coachee reflecting on and identifying their current *reality.* Next, the coach helps the coachee to actively reflect on or establish the relevance of potential refinements or inclusions in their practice and conceptualise *options* or changes that they could make to refine and improve their teaching. Finally, this is followed by the *wrap-up* phase where the coach prompts the coachee to identify what they will do and by when. In an ideal world, rather than being told what or how to change the coachee arrives at this conclusion themselves. In social psychology terms this is known as 'self-persuasion' (Aronson, 1999).

The literature reviewed suggests self-persuasion is identified as one of the most successful ways of modifying an individual's behaviour (Aronson, 1999; Knight, 2009a). Self-persuasion occurs when people take responsibility for decisions and identify changes that they will make (Aronson, 1999). Furthermore, Knight (2009a) explains the importance of teachers having choice in their development as this increases the likelihood of them embracing new ways of teaching. Coaching frameworks leverage this psychology by the coach supporting the coachee to reflect and identify the specific area they want to change and the actions that they will take to achieve this. The role of the coach as identified in the literature is to act as a guide or sounding board by helping the coachee to reflect on areas that they can refine in order to identify their next goal, not to tell them what to do (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Whitmore, 2009). By acting in this way, the coachee should be the one that has the control to make changes to their practice (Aronson, 1999; Knight, 2009a). This literature supports the definition of coaching relationships being non-hierarchical, where the coachee has the choice to select the area or focus for development (Robertson, 2005; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; Whitmore, 2009).

Aronson's research (1999) found that people were eleven times more likely to develop a habit when they persuaded themselves to do so, than when changes and habits were forced upon them. However, until teachers are faced with dilemmas or problems that challenge their norms they are generally unlikely to want or need to be coached. It is only when their norms are distorted or interrupted in some way that they become coachable (Cox, 2015). Because the basis of a coaching relationship relies on the coachee choosing to be coached and making the changes for themselves, there is a greater likelihood of the changes becoming habits that lead to refinements in the coachee's teaching practice. Once a teacher commits to engaging with a coach to refine aspects of their practice, the function of the coach is critical in supporting the coachee to do this.

Skill and expertise of the coach

When reviewing the literature on the skill and expertise of the coach, a number of sub themes emerged. These included the ways in which the coach assists the coachee to improve their practice during coaching sessions by helping the coachee

to reflect on themselves (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Fletcher, 2012). Another feature identified was the importance of adequate training and support for the coach to ensure that they understand their role and are supported to be able to coach effectively (Cordingly & Buckler, 2012; Ellington et al., 2017; Goker, 2006).

Skilled coaches assist the coachee to improve their practice and are identified in the literature as being able to facilitate conversations that enable the coachee to make sustained improvements to their teaching practice (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Fletcher, 2012). One of the key ways that coaches support the coachee is to make them aware of their current reality. This is specifically achieved through the coaching dialogue that is designed to aid the coachee in developing the skills that enhance their teaching repertoire and to get the best out of them (Fletcher, 2012). Skilled coaches achieve this by probing deeply into the coachee's practice and prompting them to reflect on the consequences and outcomes of their actions (Fletcher, 2012; Robertson, 2005). Therefore, skilled coaches understand that their role is not concerned with providing answers for the coachee, rather, it is to help the coachee to find their own solutions. However, in order for coaches to do this they need to have adequate training and time to develop their skills.

The literature also suggests that training is critical for developing effective coaches. Aspects of training identified in the literature are ensuring that beginner coaches have the time and support to develop their skills as a coach (Gallant & Gilham, 2014; Whitmore, 2009). These authors identify that time is a catalyst for developing as effective coaches. Another area the literature notes as important for coaches is that as well as knowing the content of changes to teaching practice that might make a difference for the coachee, they also need to know how to make this manageable for the coachee in the context of their daily practice (Cordingly & Buckler, 2012; Ellington et al., 2017; Goker, 2006). When coaches do not clearly understand their role and are not supported to develop their coaching competencies then the coachee is less likely to be able to implement change in their teaching (Farmery, 2006; Soisang & Wongwanich, 2013). Furthermore, many coaches in the school environment are not generally trained or funded; rather, they are learning on the job (Fletcher, 2012). Because of this, the conversations that occur between the coach

and the coachee may lack depth. When coaches lack an understanding of their role or the ability to coach effectively this negatively effects not only the development of the coachee but the learners and the organisation as well (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Whitmore, 2009). This highlights important areas that school leaders need to consider which are discussed later in this chapter.

Aside from training, a key aspect for creating effective coaching relationships is high levels of trust. Relational trust is a key characteristic that is identified in the literature as creating effective coaching relationships that foster deep learning and professional growth for the coachee (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Kennedy, 2005; Knight, 2009a; Price, 2009). A particularly effective coaching approach that develops relational trust is peer coaching. A synthesis of literature highlighted the positive impact that peer coaching has in building autonomy and self-directedness for the coachee due to trusting relationships between the coach and coachee already existing (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Goker, 2006; Lu, 2010; Russo, 2004). A positive correlation is identified between effective coaching relationships and the changes to practice of the coachee. Moreover, successful coaching models require trust to be fostered at three levels. These are: “in the coaching process, in the coaching relationship, and in the organisation and its agenda” (Netolicky, 2016, p. 69).

Because building such relationships takes time, the regularity of coaching sessions is identified in the literature as a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of the coaching relationship (Cullingford, 2006; Ellington et al., 2017; Knight, 2009a). These authors explain that a lack of time creates relationships that are unlikely to develop much beyond that of an observer in the class. Conversely, regular time allows a coaching relationship to develop reciprocity and relational trust where the coach provides support for the coachee to reflect with a focus on refining the coachee’s practice. Therefore, it is clear that time is a catalyst and critical factor in determining the speed with which relational trust is formed. A further critical factor in determining the level of trust is the level of professional safety that the coachee has.

Before trusting relationships can be established, a safe environment needs to be created between the coach and coachee (Coyle, 2018). For coaching sessions to

work effectively coaches need to respond to the needs of the coachee by taking a non-judgmental and compassionate approach to the coaching sessions (Baron, Morin, & Morin, 2011). A compassion-based coaching approach is different to a deficit approach in that it focuses on helping the coachee to recognise their strengths and use these to develop areas of weakness which promotes their ideal self (Jack, Boyatzis, Khawaja, Passarelli, & Leckie, 2013). Successful coaching partnerships are also those that have a strong 'working alliance'. Working alliance is measured by the quality and strength of the collaborative relationship between the coach and the coachee (Baron et al., 2011).

Another aspect identified by Megginson and Clutterbuck (2006) of trusting relationships is the spontaneity and regularity of meetings evident between the coach and the coachee. These authors claim that spontaneity is a characteristic of a truly collegial working environment where coaching is embedded. Spontaneity and regularity develop relationships faster because they are focused on improving the coachee's teaching practice (Datnow, 2011; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012). The literature notes that by working with their coach regularly the coachee is more likely to attempt new ways of working with their learners (Boyce, Jackson, & Neal, 2010; Coyle, 2018; Knight, 2009a; Price, 2009). Regular time spent working together, formally and informally, can increase the likelihood that collegiality and relational trust is built. When trust and safety are established the coaching arrangement can become a peer relationship focused on refining the practice of the coachee. The time spent together between the coach and the coachee builds reciprocity between the pairing, allowing the partnership to reflect on all areas of the coachee's practice (Robertson, 2005). It is only once these safe relationships are created that coaching can provide the impetus for the coachee to make significant changes in their practice.

In conclusion, it is the skill and expertise of the coach to be able to ask the right questions during these structured and unstructured times that best supports the coachee. Finally, the skill and expertise of the coach improves the quality of the coaching sessions (Blackman, 2010; Knight, 2009a; Kraft & Blazar, 2017). It is the quality of these coaching sessions which is a critical factor in developing change and

improving the practice for the coachee and organisation. The next section will consider the role and actions that school leaders take to develop and ensure coaching cultures thrive.

The role of school leaders in developing organisation culture and environment

For coaching cultures to develop, school leaders need to understand the many and varied challenges of how to create and sustain a culture in which coaching will thrive. Two prominent themes identified in the literature include the deliberate actions that school leaders take (Kraft & Blazar, 2017; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007) and the tensions that can arise when coaching is mandated (Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2013; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012). Other minor themes evident in the literature include the regularity of time as a factor in the success (or failure) of coaching interventions (Knight, 2009a) and ensuring fidelity in the coaching model used.

This first section will focus on the deliberate actions that school leaders take that can improve the likelihood, or not, of coaching being a component that develops the organisational culture and environment of the school (Fullan, 2007; Kraft & Blazar, 2017; Thomson, 2010; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). School leaders are the ones responsible for introducing productive forms of professional development that support a school's staff. This can be achieved through the leader's ability to establish and set the norms where trust is built (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). For many principals, focusing on creating transformational relationships that enhance all aspects of the school is said to be a priority. However, the literature suggests that coaching is rarely found at the center of thinking about school development and school improvement practices - rather it is seen as a way of enforcing collegiality (Fletcher, 2012; Lofthouse, Leat, Towler, Hall, & Cummings, 2010). The literature also suggests that when coaching is imposed by school leaders many teachers are resistant because of the perception of coaching being a tool used to impose collegiality on them (Fletcher, 2012; Lofthouse et al., 2010). Therefore, school leaders need to be conscious of the unintended consequences that their actions can have when using coaching to support teachers. There are clear benefits of coaching for an educational organisation noted in the literature, particularly when

coaching is delivered as a means to support teacher practice so that it can meet the intended objective and enhance school improvement.

The literature states that the role of the school leader is a critical one in influencing school improvement by creating the working conditions and fostering a commitment amongst staff to reflect on how their teaching actions achieve successful outcomes for students (Robertson, 2015; Robinson et al., 2009; Smith & Lynch, 2014). Smith and Lynch (2014) contend that school leaders are responsible for providing optimal conditions to create professional friendships to develop that enable coaching of staff to occur. This notion is further supported in both the *International Successful School Principal Project* (Drydale, 2015), and Robinson et al. (2009) where core dimensions show school leadership to a be a critical factor in achieving school improvement. The ability of school leaders to influence and develop the norms where collaboration and reflective learning is embedded in the real-life contexts of the teacher is essential to ensure that coaching sessions have a positive impact for teachers and learners (Cordingly & Buckler, 2012; Goker, 2006). One way that school principals need to support their coaches is by being an active participant in all stages of the coaching process. This includes attending coach workshops, working alongside the coach and ensuring that the coach and the way that they practice coaching aligns with the professional learning and culture of the school organisation (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Robinson et al., 2009).

School leaders also need to understand how to use coaching to best support professional development in their school. The literature reviewed here suggests that assumptions are made that professional development focused on improving teacher effectiveness will automatically lead to improved student outcomes, but there is little evidence to suggest that professional development on its own achieves this (Cornett & Knight, 2008; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). To increase the likelihood of teachers implementing ideas from professional development into their practice, school leaders are cautioned not to make coaching a stand-alone activity, but rather integrate it with professional development making it a core part of professional development practice (Hamlin, Ellinger, & Beattie, 2009; Knight, 2009a; Salomaa, 2015). Implementing coaching as a component of high-quality professional development has been shown

to increase the adoption of new practices from 15% to 95% (Knight, 2009a). Therefore, coaching can be a highly effective way of supporting the coachee to adopt, refine and implement new ways to teaching into their practice from professional development. Whilst this can be effective in school cultures where collegiality, collaboration and critical feedback are the norm, when this is not the case and coaching is mandatory, coaching can be viewed as yet another way for school leaders to ensure teacher compliance.

Another important aspect that needs to be considered is coaching being mandated and the effect that this has on the school organisation. In particular, the literature states that when coaching is made a mandatory activity and part of large-scale school reform, the unintended consequences for the coachee includes a feeling of coaching being 'done to them' and of being punished through the changes which are forced onto them by the organisation (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Knight, 2009a; Lofthouse et al., 2010). One common outcome of this is that contrived collegiality can result in these mandated partnerships between the coach and the coachee. Features of contrived collegiality include requiring teachers to work together, defining the particular time and place, and controlling the purpose and regulation of this time that forces compliance from the coachee (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012). Furthermore, coaches may guide the coachee to make particular changes due to their perception of the desired outcomes of the school leader, rather than building the capacity of the coachee to develop their own ability to reflect and make the changes themselves (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012). When contrived collegiality forces teachers away from spontaneity and engaging meaningfully with their coach to establish their purpose or refine their practice this develops negative feelings and resentment by the coachee may develop (Jack et al., 2013). It is clear that school leaders need to tread carefully when introducing coaching and understand how to make it a positive catalyst for developing the school culture and environment.

The literature notes that when school leaders focus on the coachee when offering coaching as a support, the coachee is likely to develop positive feelings about coaching (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Jack et al., 2013). Actions that school leaders can

take include making coaching optional and adopting a strength based compassionate coaching approach, features of which have been discussed previously in this chapter. A potential outcome of such an approach for the coach and coachee is that truly collegial relationships can result (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Datnow, 2011; Jack et al., 2013). Datnow (2011) found that what began as contrived situations focusing on data and compliance, evolved and developed into genuine collaboration where teachers challenged, provoked and shared ideas about their teaching. Therefore, school leaders need to consider how to implement and invest in coaching in a way that will deliver the best outcomes for all involved.

When considering where to invest resources, school leaders need to understand why this might be done. The resource of time is an important area for school leaders to consider in their coaching programs, and this resourcing can have both visible and invisible impacts on developing teacher practice. One such impact is removing experienced teachers from the classroom and training them to become coaches (Lofthouse et al., 2010). A further impact highlighted by these authors, is the degree of guilt that teachers can feel when leaving their students during class time to meet and reflect with their coach.

Coaching that is short on time can be limited in its effectiveness. The lack of time for coaching may not allow the coachee to meet with their coach before and after a classroom teaching observation, or allow the coachee time to effectively reflect on their practice and identify areas to modify or demonstrate improved practice (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Leat, Lofthouse, & Towler, 2012; Soisang & Wongwanich, 2013). Time needed for effective coaching conversations to occur also needs to be considered. When time is not considered and coaching sessions are added to the normal work of a teacher it can be overloading for all involved. This can be viewed negatively because of the coach and coachee having to fit coaching into non-contact times such as lunchtimes or before and after school, therefore adding to an already busy day. Furthermore, it is important that coaching is not administratively regulated, predictable or implementation orientated, but rather that it include spontaneous interactions between coach and coachee (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 2006). These authors argue that when the coach and

coachee only meet on a timetabled basis, the depth of the relationship between coach and coachee does not develop true levels of trust. For coaching relationships to develop and avoid this overloading, some level of administratively regulated scheduling is required to allow coaching partnerships to meet regularly and develop critical professional friendships (Blackman, 2010; DuFour & Marzano, 2009; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Leat et al., 2012; Robertson, 2015; Smith & Lynch, 2014; Taylor, Zugelder, & Bowman, 2013; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012; van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013). One conclusion that can be drawn is that building time into the routine work week for coaching sessions improves the capacity of teachers to continually develop because of the regularity with which they meet with their colleagues for coaching purposes.

School leaders need to consider the 'fidelity' or degree of exactness with which coaching models are implemented in their schools. Previously in this chapter the need to follow a structured coaching model has been considered. Three studies located for this literature review found that, over time, coaches actually stopped using the coaching model they were trained in during their interactions with coachees, and began to dominate coaching conversations more than necessary (Baron et al., 2011; Gallant & Gilham, 2014; Lofthouse et al., 2010). Baron, et al. (2010) and Gallant and Gilham (2014) found that rather than prompting the coachee to set goals for their teaching, it was the coach who chose these goals. Factors that contribute to this occurring include a lack of time for coaching conversations which can result in a disconnect between the coach and the coachee. In some instances when coaches become more experienced, Baron, et al. (2010) found that the coach begins to over or underestimate their relationship with the coachee. This leads to coaches neglecting critical issues because they are not 'tuned into' what the coachee is saying during the coaching sessions. The repercussions of not following the model or prompting the coachee to identify their goal can lead to diminished outcomes from the coaching including the breakdown of trust in the coaching relationship. A further reason for this could be the time pressure that is placed on the coach and the coachee (Blackman, 2010; Dufour & Marzano, 2009; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Leat et al., 2012; Smith & Lynch, 2014).

There are clearly many areas that school leaders need to consider. The literature here has identified that coaching can have positive impacts when implemented in a way that does not force compliance, but where it supports the development of the coachee. School leaders need to understand that using coaching as a mandatory tool can have the effect of enforced compliance. If school leaders want to develop the capacity of the teachers and their schools, then they need to emphasise that coaching is a professional support function, a tool for them to choose to use to reflect, not one that is forced on them. Finally, school leaders need to understand the importance of the coachee's desire to be coached.

Key coachee characteristics

The literature suggests that the characteristics of the coachee are a key driver in changes being made. For coaching to be effective, coachees need to be willing to change, be capable of achieving their desired outcomes and have the opportunity to practice new behaviours (Kraft & Blazar, 2017; Salomaa, 2015; Whitmore, 2009). Furthermore, without the coachee being aware of and taking responsibility to make changes to their practice, coaching is unlikely to lead to change for the coachee (Aronson, 1999; Whitmore, 2009). A key characteristic is the coachee's receptiveness to feedback. The literature notes that receptivity to feedback, as well as the level of goal orientation or desire to make changes to practice, are central indicators of how effective the coaching process will be for the coachee (Bozer et al., 2013; Flaherty, 2010). A coachee with a high level of goal orientation sees feedback as a tool through which to achieve their goals more quickly. Therefore, the skill of the coach in being able to prompt the coachee through skilled questioning to deeply reflect can support the coachee to gain the most from any coaching interaction.

Features of successful coaching environments are identified in the literature as those cultures that provide choice for teachers to select whether or not they choose to participate in a coaching relationship and whether or not they can choose their coach (van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). Having the choice to participate is an indicator of an environment where coaching is one of the support tools for the coachee. The literature has noted the importance of people having the choice in controlling the

changes that they make (Aronson, 1999). Therefore, choice is one of the critical factors in the success of any coaching interaction.

This literature review has previously identified that successful coach and coachee interactions are enhanced when a trust based non-hierarchical relationship is built between the two (Netolicky, 2016; Salomaa, 2015; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). These authors identify that the critical aspect of building trust for the coachee is that the relationship is reciprocal. Another way that coaching partnerships build trust is by maintaining confidentiality and a duty of care with each other (Netolicky, 2016; Salomaa, 2015; van Nieuwerburgh, 2012). As noted previously, skillful coaches can accelerate trust when their questioning is a result of them listening to and being guided by the coachee. Highly effective coaches are characterised by their ability to be non-judgemental and allow the coachee to guide the conversation. In doing so, levels of trust are built over time through these interactions focused on the coachee (Netolicky, 2016; Salomaa, 2015). Therefore, characteristics of successful coaching relationships require reciprocity, confidentiality and a freedom from judgement to develop trust.

The literature further highlights that experienced teachers' needs are less likely to be met by the behaviourist nature of any model of coaching (Gallant & Gilham, 2014; Netolicky, 2015). Experienced teachers require coaching that is flexible and responsive to their needs. For coaching to achieve such needs, a level of flexibility needs to be in place where following the prescribed model is not as critical as taking a more constructivist approach where the coach listens and is guided by the coachee (Baron, Morin & Morin, 2011; Netolicky, 2016). The literature notes that experienced coachees do not perceive coaching helps them to achieve their goals any faster (Gallant & Gilham, 2014). In fact, Gallant and Gilham (2014) found that experienced coachees attributed their achievement of goals down to their own ability to reflect, refine and utilise their knowledge as enabling them to make effective changes. Experienced coachees see coaching as a way of empowering themselves and others to make changes. Coaches simply provide the initial space for experienced coachees to begin reflecting and refining what they do (Gallant & Gilham, 2014; Goker, 2006; Russo, 2004). In summary, coaching and coaching

models should be adapted to suit the diverse needs of coachees. Therefore, school leaders need to be aware of the needs of the teachers in their schools and apply a bespoke coaching approach that meets the needs of each individual teacher in their institutions as opposed to applying a ‘one size fits all’ coaching model.

Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed current literature concerned with coaching, how it is used and why it can work in an educational environment. Research that does exist from overseas contexts identifies the positive effect that coaching can have on improving the educational outcomes for students when teachers improve their practice as a result of coaching. This literature review has also highlighted aspects of coaching that need to be considered for it to have a positive impact in the primary school setting. As a result, the overarching questions for this thesis research are confirmed as:

1. How do educational leaders resource coaching?
2. How do educational leaders give coaching the best chance of working?
3. In what ways do teachers perceive that coaching has affected their teaching practice?
4. What are the perceived enablers and barriers to effective coaching?

The next chapter will outline the research methodology used in this research study, and explain and justify the selection of a qualitative approach in the selection of methods, data collection and analysis.

Chapter Three: Methodology and methods

This chapter overviews the research methodology and methods and presents a rationale for taking a constructivist qualitative approach to this research study. This chapter begins by justifying my research design. I then outline the selected research method, and how semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. Finally, a description of the data analysis techniques, the validity of this analysis and ethical considerations is provided.

The aim of this research was to critically examine the role of coaching in improving primary school teachers' practice. To achieve this aim, four questions were developed. These were asked to school leaders and coaches and also teachers, who received coaching. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their beliefs and experiences around coaching. The research questions that underpin this thesis study are:

1. How do educational leaders resource coaching?
2. How do educational leaders give coaching the best chance of working?
3. In what ways do teachers perceive that coaching has affected their teaching practice?
4. What are the perceived enablers and barriers to effective coaching?

The first question in this study enquired into the understanding of how school leaders used coaching to develop their teachers and organisations. The second question aimed to understand the ways that coaching was used to develop teacher practice. The third and fourth questions were designed to enquire into how teachers viewed coaching.

Research design

Ontology and epistemology

In educational research, ontology relates to the world view of the researcher. In this research, the ontological view of constructivism was taken. Constructivism assumes that the reality of the participant is continually being socially constructed and revised through interactions with others (Bryman, 2012; Salvin-Baden & Major). Because this research sought to understand the lived experiences and developed perceptions of the participants, a constructivist position was appropriate. The questions that

underpinned this study required the participants to share their experiences of coaching as they understood it in their schools. Therefore, the identified themes emerged from the data gathered regarding the participants' world views of coaching. The constructivist paradigm was appropriate to use in this qualitative research as it sought to understand the multiple perspectives of the participants in the context of their everyday work.

Epistemology is concerned with the pursuit of developing knowledge. The epistemological position of this research was that of interpreting the individual accounts of the participants who are experiencing coaching. Therefore, the position of this research was closer to the emic end of the emic-etic continuum. An emic view in this research is one where the researcher draws from the basic experiences that the participants have in their everyday life and the environment from where they draw these experiences (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013). This study was based on understanding the experiences of the leaders and teachers involved in using coaching to improve their practice in two schools. As a result, the interpretivist epistemological position was not only appropriate but aligned with the ontology of this study.

The qualitative approach

Because I assumed a constructivist ontological position and an epistemological view of interpretivism to understand individuals' accounts of coaching in their contexts this helped me to identify the specific qualitative research approach that I took. Using the wheel of research choices developed by Salvin-Baden and Major (2013) ensured that there was congruence in my qualitative approach. Because of the ontological and epistemological position, the paradigm of constructivism was adopted, which was an appropriate qualitative approach (Salvin-Badin & Major, 2013).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that because the focus of research is on understanding the experiences of the participants that a qualitative design is needed. Having identified this paradigm ensuring that the rest of the research design was congruent with this approach was critical. I was specifically interested in investigating the experiences of how the contemporary phenomenon of coaching has affected

teachers within the real-world context of two primary schools. This thesis research was focused on gathering rich descriptive data of the lived experiences of these teachers and leaders at two Auckland primary schools. A qualitative approach required me to begin with the individual participant and understand their perceptions of the world around them. Braun and Clarke (2013) identify a qualitative approach as one that uses words as data and that these are collected and analysed in all sorts of ways, and this aligned with my research design.

In this research the use of semi-structured interviews was the primary data gathering tool. Once the data were collected, a qualitative approach required the data to be assembled and patterns identified using inductive reasoning. The writings of Newby (2014) identify that it is not essential for the researcher to remain neutral in a qualitative approach as the purpose of such an approach is to assemble evidence and use inductive reasoning to identify patterns and themes. Subsequently, this assisted me with the choices that I made in selecting the research methodology and method. Furthermore, the design of my qualitative research was congruent with the ontology and epistemology because this research was interested in the 'how's' and 'why's' of the beliefs and opinions of the participants with aim of the research being to understand how coaching has affected improved teacher practice.

The specific qualitative approach used in this research was qualitative case study. Qualitative case study is an in-depth way of describing and analysing a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Yin (2014) explain that this '*what'* is a bounded system. A limited number of individual teachers or leaders who were experienced in coaching in the two schools and who met the criteria for inclusion were the '*what'* being studied. Therefore, the particular participants at the two schools were the cases being studied and as such these were the bounded systems. Bounding the case was critical in ensuring that this case study approach is an appropriate one for this thesis research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). The advantages of a qualitative case study approach to this inquiry was that it provided the participants with the ability to tell their story. This was a major advantage of the case study approach as it allowed for in-depth, rich data to be

collected which produced comprehensive findings (Yin, 2014). Another advantage was that these data were collected from the natural setting in which it was found.

One of the main disadvantages of a small-scale case study approach is that the data collected and consequent analysis and findings can not necessarily be generalised to the wider community. However, Yin (2014) argues that despite the small-scale nature of a case study, the findings from it can in fact be used to predict outcomes in similar communities. The findings of this research, I believe would be able to achieve this as the cases being studied are not only diverse but gather data from a variety of participants which will offer a range of viewpoints.

External validity and transferability

Transferability was achieved by ensuring that a small non-random, purposeful sample was selected. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identify that a common strategy is to collect rich descriptive data. This data is an emic or insider account of the phenomena being researched. Furthermore, improving the external validity is in part achieved in this research through the detailed description of the findings, in the adequate use of quotes and documents. Therefore, the description can be used by someone in a receiving context who may assess the similarity between their context and that of this study. To improve the transferability and achieve this goal, the research was conducted in two primary schools with a range of participants, that included two school principals, two coaches and four teachers who had received coaching. The two schools were chosen because of their reputation for supporting teachers using a coaching approach. This maximum variation approach increases the transferability of the research. Having this variation across two cases can make the interpretation that much more compelling, hence improving the external validity of this research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Because of the qualitative case study approach, how data were collected was considered in the research design. The focus was on gathering the perceptions of participants on the role that coaching has on improving their practice by using semi-structured interviews as the primary data gathering method. Within the context of this research I needed to understand my role as researcher. As mentioned earlier,

maintaining neutrality in this research was not a primary concern. However, I did need to consider and understand how my beliefs and values bias could affect the data gathering stage and the validity of the story that I told. I was not neutral in this process as I was the one who developed the questions that were asked in the semi-structured interviews. I also needed to consider my own experiences as a coach in my professional life as a deputy principal in a central Auckland school. After considering all of these factors I engaged with my supervisors to help design questions that were not leading and enabled the participants the time to share their experiences of coaching. Furthermore, I did not use my own school as one of the research sites in order to reduce any power imbalance that would have emerged by conducting research in my own school.

Selection of schools and participants

I sought assistance from colleagues in my professional learning groups and educational connections to identify a range of schools that they knew used coaching practices. This resulted in multiple schools being identified in the greater Auckland area. I used this information to do a Google search of the schools and then using their websites accessed their Charter documents to understand the aims of the schools in regard to coaching. Following this I mailed a letter (Appendix A), followed a week later by an email, to the principals to arrange to meet. Two out of the three school principals I approached responded positively to my request to research in their schools. I met with both principals, outlined my research and asked them to sign a form approving my request to conduct research in their schools (Appendix B) These two principals took it upon themselves to help me to recruit my participants based on the criteria that I had set for the participants.

Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is a method used by researchers when selecting specific participants who are well informed and able to provide knowledge or experience in a specific area. Gathering rich data across the two sites required me to consider carefully how qualified the participants were in enabling me to achieve the aims of the research. Because of the small-scale nature of this research and to ensure that the participants were able to help me achieve the aims of my research non-

probability, purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling allowed me to deliberately select participants for the semi-structured interviews who best met the needs of my research. Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013) and Tolich and Davidson, (2011) explain the importance of carefully selecting these key informants to ensure that they were knowledgeable and experienced so that the data they provided was be useful and informative for the researcher.

Having an understanding of the type of data I planned to collect was key. To achieve the aims of research such as mine, it is recommended that the researcher considers the qualities of information that they need (Tongco, 2007). I wanted to ensure that the data that I collected came from participants who were experienced and had experienced regular coaching. It was for this reason that criteria were put into place when selecting participants. This ensured that I gathered data that met the aims of my research so that I could understand and identify themes around the role that coaching has for experienced teachers and school leaders. Therefore, the key informants were selected based on them having had a minimum of two years' experience of coaching or being coached. Moreover, I anticipated that participants would be selected based on their ability to understand the questions and answer them by drawing on their coaching experiences. This type of participant selection is described as non-probability sampling (Guest et al., 2013). The question that the researcher is asking is of the utmost importance when selecting purposive sampling. Purposive sampling fits within a qualitative methodology using a case study approach because it is seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomena being researched (Tongco, 2007).

For me to develop rapport and build relational trust quickly I emailed the potential participants a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C). Once they had replied to me confirming their willingness to participate in this research I asked them to identify a time and place that best suited them to be interviewed as well as providing my contact details for them should they need to contact me.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews

Once participants had been identified semi-structured interviews were held. The purpose of using semi-structured interviews was to gather rich data that was aimed at eliciting responses from the individual participants about their experiences of coaching. This was achieved through an active discussion between two people (myself and each participant) that was aimed at gathering data to help me to enhance my understanding of coaching as a process and social interaction for each individual (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden, 2011). The semi-structured interview was chosen because I was only interviewing each participant once. Salvin-Baden and Major (2013) identify that when you only have one chance to interview a participant that the semi-structured interview is appropriate as it allows the researcher the flexibility to decide how to best use the time and keeps the interview focused.

Keeping focus is achieved by the use of an interview schedule. The purpose of this schedule was to ensure that I was able to cover the areas that I needed to whilst allowing for additional topics to be investigated as they came up (Bryman, 2012; Salvin-Baden & Major). Bryman (2012) states that semi-structured interviewing is appropriate for a small-scale qualitative case study because it is flexible and allows the interviewee to identify and explain their “understanding events, patterns and forms of behaviour” (p. 471). The interview questions (Appendix D) were designed to gather in-depth rich data from the participants that allowed them to express their perceptions of coaching in developing their teacher practice. The data drawn from the participants allowed me to identify and develop themes and new ideas to understand how the participants’ perception of coaching had impacted on their improved practice.

As part of my preparation, I conducted practice interviews with two colleagues to seek feedback that would enable me to refine my technique and make the most of the valuable time I had with each participant. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that doing so allows the researcher to refine the questions and understand which would be useful and which to discard. These rehearsals provided me with the ability to

practice using two digital recording devices. As a result, I was able to use their feedback and further research on interview technique to include an 'ice breaker question' to develop rapport. It also helped me to refine my questions to improve their ability to verify, prompt and probe the participants by asking follow-up questions to pursue lines of inquiry and closure questions to finish a line of inquiry (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

As this research uses a qualitative case study methodology, the advantage of using semi-structured interviews was that they allowed the participants to provide their views in their terminology. Based on the participants' responses, this allowed me to ask follow up questions that sought to elicit further information and enabled the interview and research topic to be shaped by the interviewee, such as highlighting unforeseen issues that could be relevant (Menter et al., 2011). The writings of Salvin-Baden and Major (2013) identify this as a strength of semi-structured interviews because of the targeted nature of data collection and ability to yield in depth information along with it being relatively easy for the interviewee to participate in. These authors also state that it is a respected way of gathering data by most qualitative researchers (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013).

A further advantage of semi-structured interviews is the large amount of data that are collected. These data are detailed and can be verbose and so a systematic way of handling and analysing the data is required (Wellington, 2015). To address this, I recorded, verbatim, the interviews and transcribed them. Using coding was a way for me to sort through the large amounts of data and begin to recognise themes as they emerged in the participants' data, and constantly compare these with participants within and across the two schools. The analytic approach of thematic analysis was used to interpret the findings (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013). The coded transcripts were analysed and identified themes were recorded using Nvivo, a widely recognised qualitative tool for analysing the data.

The main disadvantage of this approach is that it was time consuming. Time was not only needed for the interviews to occur but also for the transcription and subsequent

analysis of the data that were gathered (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013). To mitigate against the disadvantage of time for the participants, I asked the participants to identify the time and the place for the interviews to occur and I ensured that I was punctual and on time for the interviews.

A further potential disadvantage that could have added time for the interviewees and myself was the level of my preparedness. Mutch (2005) identifies that being ill prepared is a certain way to limit the value of the interview. I addressed this by ensuring that I was well prepared. This included practicing my interview technique prior to the research commencing with two colleagues to refine my technique, having a copy of all documentation prepared in advance and available, as well as having spare batteries and a spare recording device should my primary device fail.

A further disadvantage is that researchers do not always allow the participant to offer their own unique perspective (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013). Depending on the context of the interview, power relationships can come into play. This can result in the interviewee providing information that they think the interviewer wants to hear that might cast them or their school context in a favourable light. To reduce the power relationship, I ensured that the interview participants were from schools other than my own and that the interviews took place at a mutually agreed location. Finally, I ensured that my body language was passive, engaging and responsive to the participants during the interviews and that I made eye contact and responded to them by using their answers to dictate the order that questions were asked.

A further consideration is that the quality of the data is dependent on the relevant experience of the interviewee (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013). To address this, I enacted criteria for the selection of participants into the study, that is, they needed to be a school leader, coach or teacher who has at least two years of coaching experience.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are a set of guiding principles that need to be considered before and during the research process (Salvin-Baden & Major, 2013). One of the

key ethical considerations focused around my treatment of the individual participants who volunteered to provide information to achieve the goal of this study. Waring (2017) discusses that ethics in educational research is values focused. He divides these values into two categories epistemic and practical. Epistemic values are concerned with knowledge. The purpose of this research was building knowledge from the participants' experiences of coaching. Waring (2017) explains that researchers need to be committed to presenting truthful knowledge. This involved me confirming the truthfulness of the data by providing the participant the opportunity to review the transcript and then presenting my findings after analysing the data truthfully. The practical purpose of ethical research is related to how we interact with the participants and the organisations that we research in. Salvin-Bowden and Major (2013) advocate that, as educational researchers we need to go beyond achieving a minimum ethical requirement and aim for excellent treatment of the individual (and organisation). They identify three areas wherein this can be achieved: respect for the person, beneficence and justice (Salvin-Bowden & Major, 2013). To address this as a researcher I needed to address a number of important principles. These are identified in the next sections.

Informed consent

A key aspect of this research was fully informing the participants of all aspects of the research as part of inviting them to participate. This involved the researcher providing information to the potential participants about what is being researched and what the research will be used for (Hammersley, 2014). Hammersley (2014) explains that the concept of informed consent centres on what it means to be truly informed and the autonomy of individuals to use this information to make their decisions. I ensured that participants had autonomy to give informed consent by presenting the purpose of my research to them via the school principal and then inviting interested persons to take a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) that explained more about the scope and purpose of the research. This gave them an opportunity to gather more information as well as providing them with the means to indicate their willingness to participate in the research. Potential participants were free from coercion as they had autonomy over emailing me that they were interested in participating. Before the interview was conducted I encouraged the participants to

ask any further questions that they had and to read the Consent Form (Appendix E) before signing. Participants were asked to review the transcripts of their interview following the interview and were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time but that depending on when this occurred that their data may not be able to be removed.

Minimisation of harm

A number of areas were considered when identifying and minimising harm to the participants and researcher. This included not researching in my own school. Doing so would complicate the confidentiality and anonymity of participants from my school. Further consideration was given to the risk for participants electing to involve themselves in the interview stage of the data gathering. To reduce the risk to potential participants I planned to present the research to participants at their staff meetings. However, this proved difficult as school principals took it upon themselves to select staff members who they thought met my participant criteria and invited these people to email me. One principal did this because they stated that they did not have time for me to present the purpose of my research and seek participants at staff meetings. The other principal did this to be helpful. I believe that no participants were under any obligation to help me from their principals and I do not believe that the principals were trying to control the data that I gathered. Once the participants had emailed me I replied to them enclosing the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) and the Consent Form (Appendix E) and advised them that they did not have to participate in my research. No one declined to be involved in the semi-structured interview. Finally, before the interview because of the involvement of the principals I clearly explained to the participants that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

Truthfulness and limitation of deception

To minimise deception, I emailed the participants a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews. At all times during the data gathering process I provided opportunities for the participants to ask any questions of me that related to areas of the research that they were unsure about. This helped to build reciprocal trust between us and this was critical in getting

accurate information from the participants. I spent time before recording the interviews explaining the purpose of the research and clarifying and answering any questions that the participants had. Following the interview, I transcribed verbatim what had been discussed and emailed a copy of their transcript to each participant asking them to review and make changes to elaborate or delete parts that they believed were inaccurate. This helped to ensure the validity of the individual conversations.

Risk to the participants was minimised because I was asking them to comment and talk about aspects relating to their everyday job. Coe, Waring, Hedges, and Arthur (2017) identify that during the interview it is important for the researcher to be aware that some questions can have the potential to cause harm when asked to the participant. To address this, I advised the participants that at any time if they needed a break or did not want to answer a question then this was absolutely okay to do. During the interviews I used prompts to encourage the participant to describe an area in more detail and ensure that the participants could include as much information as they wanted to answer the questions about their coaching experiences. Furthermore, I restated in a sentence what the respondent had said for two reasons: firstly, to ensure I accurately understood what they had shared and secondly, to build rapport with them by showing I was listening. This addressed a potential weakness of the semi-structured interview in that it allowed the interviewee the opportunity to offer his or her unique perspective as noted by Salvin-Baden and Major (2013).

Confidentiality and anonymity

Every effort was made to ensure that the identities of the participants in this research were protected. Confidentiality, the means by which the researcher protects the privacy of the participants, and anonymity, a measure to protect the privacy of the participants, was prioritised (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The systems used to attempt to achieve this included ensuring that pseudonyms were used for all participants and schools in all documents and in the final thesis. All data that were collected was protected through the use of password encryption for digital data, and forms and hard copies of the research and findings were stored in a locked

cupboard. The participants' identities remained confidential through the collection of consent forms and the ethical procedures outlined, and followed, by the university. The schools' and participants' identities were known only to myself and my supervisors.

Cultural sensitivity

In research conducted in New Zealand consideration needs to be given to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. These three principles are: partnership, participation and protection. The principle of partnership was addressed by developing openness and honesty about the purpose of my research and how it would be shared in the wider community. The interview questions were trialled to test their content and quality as well as ensuring that they were culturally appropriate. The participation principle was addressed because the nature of the research focused on participants discussing their everyday professional experiences of coaching. Furthermore, I showed my thanks to each participant by offering a small koha at the end of the interview in acknowledgement of their knowledge and time. The protection principle was addressed by taking necessary steps to protect the participants' confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms and keeping the data they provided and subsequent analysis and findings secure. Finally, I showed respect for my participants at all times through seeking an interview space that they were comfortable with and demonstrating active listening especially during the interviews.

Data analysis

During each interview, notes were made and the interview digitally recorded. The note taking allowed me to identify potential themes as they occurred in the interview, and this also allowed for me to pursue lines of questioning to get a richer understanding of what the participant meant. A transcription was made by me following each interview and emailed to the participant to ensure it was an accurate record of the interview. Following confirmation of the transcript from the participant I was able to analyse it using techniques identified by Wellington (2015) and Saldaña (2013). First, I read the transcript multiple times to get a clearer understanding of the conversation. Using the questions that I asked the participants, I broke the interview

up into chunks and developed a coding system to further refine and 'mine' the information in the interview. I coded each transcript multiple times noting ideas and themes that began to emerge from the data. Following this first phase of chunking and coding, I then input the transcripts into the qualitative data analysis tool Nvivo to ensure that I had a coded record of the conversation. Using coding consistently with Nvivo enabled me to identify similarities and differences in the data between participants at each school and between participants across the schools. Mutch (2005) identifies this checking for similar ideas between data as 'constant comparison'. A strength of the Nvivo system is that this allowed me to identify emerging themes based on the number of times that participants mentioned particular areas, initially when answering a question and subsequently throughout the interview. The Nvivo software allowed me to group these repeated ideas into categories which allowed for a deeper analysis of the participant responses.

Throughout the collection and analysis of the data, memos were made to record my reflections and thinking as they occurred. These memos were referred to throughout the research especially when interpreting the findings to help me to ensure that I was analysing the data and not simply reproducing what I heard. Bazeley (2013) explains the importance of reflecting and the self-discussions that I made to ensure that I was able to reflect and modify all parts of the research process. They were also helpful when discussing emerging themes from the data with my supervisors, as well as reclassifying and combining codes that related. Throughout the coding process, a 'touch test' concept was used to ensure that I was going deeper that simply repeating what the participants told me (Saldaña, 2013). Using memos helped me to constantly reflect on my data, identify emerging themes and categorise the data. Doing so helped me to reduce and begin to understand my findings.

By analysing and reducing the data certain themes began to emerge from the findings. Themes are identified by Braun and Clarke (2013) as something that is important about the data in relation to the research question and that the data begin to show patterns in the dataset. To begin identifying these patterns in the dataset, the mind mapping software Xmind zen was used to record ideas identified in the participants' data using a process coding approach. Saldaña (2013) identifies that

the process coding approach is an appropriate coding approach to use when analysing data in a case study. Using a first cycle process coding approach meant that I could begin to start to work more at an analytical level to sort significant statements made by the participants from each school into similar groups and then re-sort them as themes began to emerge. After reading and rereading these themes I was able to conduct a second cycle of coding which helped to further refine these themes using the major questions of this research study.

Validity and trustworthiness

Validity can be viewed as the level of accuracy and truthfulness of the research in achieving the aims that it set out to. When assessing validity in a case study, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified the following areas need to be considered: internal validity and reliability.

Internal validity

Internal validity or credibility is concerned at a basic level with answering the question: Are the findings credible given the data presented? (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A powerful strategy that Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identify to achieve this is the use of triangulation. Data triangulation was used to improve the internal validity of this research by ensuring that four participants from each school were used. This enabled sub themes to begin to appear as participants corroborated parts of others' views of the phenomena of coaching being investigated. Selecting two schools in which to conduct the research meant that the data provided by the eight teachers and leader participants across the two school cases studied could begin to corroborate and develop themes between the two schools and eight participants. Another strategy that Meriam and Tisdell (2016) encourage is the use of member checking. These authors write that when used throughout the research, member checking has the effect of strengthening the credibility of the research. This was achieved by returning the transcribed interviews to participants in a timely manner to confirm that each was a true and accurate account of the interview. I had previously considered my position or reflexivity to understand any bias, dispositions or assumptions that I had specifically relating to this research being undertaken. Finally, I engaged in peer examination of my findings by having them reviewed by my

supervisors throughout the research and moving on when there was agreement with my findings and themes.

Reliability and consistency

Reliability and consistency are concerned with the extent to which the research can be replicated. Qualitative research seeks to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it. A complication of social science research is that human behaviour is never static and always changing. Therefore, an important consideration for me as the researcher was to ensure that the findings were consistent with the data collected. Again, there were specific strategies previously described that helped to ensure that reliability and consistency were achieved. This included triangulation, peer examination, investigator positioning and keeping an audit trail. The audit trail was developed by keeping a record of my reflections and considerations of the data as well as writing memos that were referred to following interviews and document review.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this research is tied directly to me as the researcher. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) warn that as the researcher is the primary data gathering tool that the data is filtered through the researcher's own particular theoretical position and biases. A way that ensured that I minimised my bias and position from the research findings (as previously mentioned) was to engage in peer review by getting my supervisors to review the findings and the relevance of the subsequent discussion. Before the interviews I ensured that participants understood their right not to answer questions that they might find uncomfortable, as well as explaining that I would send a copy of this transcribed interview to them to allow them to make changes prior to analysis.

Summary

This qualitative research study sought to explore and understand the role of coaching in primary school teachers' improved practice. This chapter explained the research methodology and design, data collection and analysis used within this research study. The interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach was justified

throughout all aspects of this chapter. The data collection through semi-structured interviews was clarified and explained. Finally, the data analysis, validity and ethical considerations for this research were outlined. In the next chapter, I will present my findings from the eight interviews.

Chapter Four: Presentation of findings

In this chapter data from eight interviews are analysed and presented. The chapter begins with a description of the way the data are presented. The research findings are then presented. The chapter is completed with a summary of these findings. The semi-structured interview questions were designed to investigate school leaders' and teachers' experiences of coaching in regard to the four sub-questions of my investigation:

1. How do educational leaders resource coaching?
2. How do educational leaders give coaching the best chance of working?
3. In what ways do teachers perceive that coaching has affected their teaching practice?
4. What are the perceived enablers and barriers to effective coaching?

The following section will present the findings from the eight participant interviews. Codes have been used for the eight participants. For example Leader One at School A is identified as L1A. Where there was variety and detail in participants' responses, summary tables have been utilised to display these findings. The overall sum of the participants' responses is shown in the 'Total' column, and the concepts are listed in descending order according to the total number of responses. The rationale for showing the frequency of individual responses together with the overall totals is to identify clearly which concepts were discussed most often and by whom. Categories or questions which were answered briefly by individual participants have not been included in the tables. In these cases a summary of conversations was made in paragraph form supported by quotes from the participants.

Question One (Leaders): Can you describe how coaching is used in your school?

Table 4.1 overleaf presents the data pertaining to Question One, and shows that participants' responses were spread fairly evenly across the nine categories.

Table 4.1 Leaders' descriptions of coaching use in schools

Response Categories	Number of responses per participant				Total
Description of coaching use	School One L1A	L1B	School Two L2E	L2F	
Coaching used as a way of facilitating formal PLC group discussions	3	3	9	5	20
Coaching used as a tool to develop and build iterative inquiry with teacher on impact of their teaching	6	2	4	3	15
Coaching used as a way of being – between teachers and with students	4	1	3	2	10
Empowers teachers	4	1	4		9
Coaching focus and use are linked to and focus on the schools' strategic plan		3	2	1	6
Facilitative questioning approach with teachers	4	1	1		6
Time funded for coaching			2	1	3
Coaching used as a way to build collective efficacy of the team – become great collaborators			3		3
Informal coaching conversations used to problem solve (1-1)	2				2

Overall, data from the table show that coaching was described as being used in a variety of ways to achieve various functions in the participants' schools. Even when different coaching processes were used for different staff members, the 'practice' of coaching was viewed as an important part of school culture. School leaders identified that they achieved this through coaches having conversations that empowered and encourage teachers to reflect, refine and continuously improve their teaching. This was particularly evident in Participants E and A's comments:

> *I do think coaching is a great mechanism as in sense making - having the hard to have conversations or whatever [It's] about moving, it's about growth, it's about learning, it's about empowering, it's about moving things forward* [L2E]

> *Because it empowers, and it becomes an agent of change and it changes the locus of control from a hierarchical position to one where actually there is potentially opportunities for both to learn…it is for the person who is being coached, the lights go on and I've seen the difference in? people when they walk in, to walking out after they've been coached* [L1A]

Furthermore, leaders wanted coaching to become embedded to the extent that staff used informal coaching 'talk' even in ad hoc professional discussions. Participant F identified that this was occurring in the following comment:

> *it's just it's great, we're in an environment where coaching is something that is so strongly encouraged and it's really nice to be able to go to different people…I think a lot of it is the subconscious coaching and I don't think people realise they're doing it* [L2F]

Leaders from both schools also explained that coaching was used formally with groups of teachers in their schools. In School One, Participant A identified that this was to further develop the coaching model with teachers in the school, whilst at School Two a coach was working directly with teachers on an area identified by them as a team to develop. Responses from leaders in School Two highlighted the additional curriculum release time (CRT) that had been funded by the school's Board of Trustees to allow for coaching teams during the school day. The time created by this extra release was identified by participants at School Two as a critical way for coaches to work effectively with teams to develop their coaching culture. Participant F's comments clearly highlight this:

> *But then we realised for teams to actually be collaborating together they needed that dialogue time. So, then what we started to do is we started to free up the teams for their 1 hour together. Then we realised, OK 1 hour's not*

actually enough. We need to support and then we started to. The Board top [the time] up to 3 hours a fortnight so teams were released 3 hours a fortnight then it became a week [L2F]

Question Two, Four and Five have been grouped together as the training received was part of the implementation and development of the coaching model in both schools.

Question Two (Leaders): How did you implement coaching into your school?

Question Four (Leaders): What training did you receive to implement this model of coaching in your school?

Question Five (Leaders): What kinds of training do you give your coaches?

The categories in Table 4.2 pertain to the responses from leader participants. The table shows that the responses were spread fairly evenly across the five categories.

Table 4.2 Leaders' descriptions of coaching implementation

Response Categories	Number of responses per participant				Total
Description of how coaching was implemented and training received	School One L1A	L1B	School Two L2E	L2F	
Private education provider used to implement schoolwide and train coaches	5	8	3	8	24
Developed and used in professional learning teams	3	3	9	5	20
Ongoing internally led professional development for staff/coaches	3	2	3	6	14
Developed over time	3		3	3	9
Building knowledge and understanding of the purpose of coaching	1	1	1		3

Generally, there was consistency in the responses to these questions from school leaders. Developing a coaching 'culture' was identified in both schools as being a process which occurred over time. This was evident in the following comments:

> *So, I've been here this is my 11th year and I started looking at coaching in my first year here. It didn't really take off and from my reflection of that I was a new principal in the school and I needed to build the trust in the relationships first so I bought it in too early so I had to have it in. There was quite a lot of push back around the facilitative questioning type approach and then I let it just sit and we just used facilitative questioning through our coaching trios for a couple of years. Then we carried on and did the full model again with the leadership team so, that's been a series of development over time* [L1A]

The employment of a private education consultancy organisation was identified as being an important factor in the development for both schools in developing their coaching practice. Furthermore, both schools continued to invest in externally supporting school lead coaches. This was facilitated by the consultancy company who provided training in each school that was designed to develop and enhance knowledge and understanding of the coaching model. Participants A and E described how this worked for their schools:

> *A facilitator has done professional learning with our leadership team in terms of growing them as Leaders as well. Larry is part of a PLG group with this facilitator, I am part of a different group so she coaches all the time. So we are learning from her all the time and then we are developing that culture of coaching within the school* [L1A]

> *So, two years ago we had all the leadership and these identified 6/7 teacher effectiveness coaches and they ran bespoke professional learning here, and more recently Emma and Claire are undertaking that stage 4 coaching through the private education company we have engaged... it's not cheap* [L2E]

In addition, leaders continued developing coaching formally with the teachers in their Professional Learning Community (PLC) teams, as well as informally where a coaching approach was taken in discussions between colleagues:

> *In our professional learning communities we are encouraged to coach each other, I was talking about an issue and they were asking me coaching type questions to explore an issue but again it wasn't a formal coaching session* [L1B]

School leaders identified that continuing to develop and train coaches offered dual benefits.

Providing additional opportunities for teachers to train as coaches within the teaching faculty, helped to embed coaching cultures into their schools. School leaders achieved this through a combination of external training and 'in-house' professional development. This is reflected in the following comments:

> *I have been supporting them in developing them to grow comfortable and build their capability to coach a team and now they've accelerated through us coaching them and building them, to feeling quite confident to start next term coaching teams without my support* [L2F]

> *So twice a term sometimes 3 times I schedule instead of a leadership admin meeting it's a leadership PLC so I'm looking at growing their capabilities as Leaders and coaching is very much part of that* [L1A]

Question Three (leaders): Is there a particular coaching model that you use at your school?

School leaders identified the same coaching model that both schools used. Furthermore, leaders identified the important place that theory had in the development of the coaching model in their schools. Well researched coaching models underpinned decisions about the model that was used and the areas that the model focused on developing. The responses below reflect this:

> *So, the real professional learning and growth happens collaboratively and the reason we do that is around the collective impact research that has showed collective efficacy as having a 1.57 effect. Because our teachers work in modern learning environments their practice needs to be highly collaborative and together so our coaching goes in to build collective efficacy* [L2E]
> *So, we have adopted that model because it's been proven. It's informed by Christian van Nieuwerburgh through London and John Campbell in Australia. So, it's a well-known and well respected and well researched model* [L1A]

Leaders and teachers at School Two identified that a cyclical model was used to supplement the coaching model. These cycles are described as five-week intensive coaching sessions focusing on the areas in the school's strategic plan. Individual teachers identified areas using a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis and then agreed as a team on the area in which they wanted support from their coach to use correctly, as shown in the following comments:

> *We run these in 5-week cycles, they're like Simon Briggs sprint cycles, so it is very intensive and petite and about…it's one of the professional learning mechanisms if you like* [L2E]

> *We do a SWOT analysis each term where the teams consider what coaching input they would like and then we're giving 5 to 6 week intensive stints of coaching with the team and then we're was tapping into individuals just on a noticing basis so it's quite different this year* [L2F]

Question Six (Leaders): How well is coaching working in your school?

Table 4.3 presents data pertaining to Question Six. The table shows some variance in the responses from leaders across the categories.

Table 4.3 Leaders' descriptions of how well coaching is working in their school

Category	Number of responses per participant				Total
	School 1		School 2		
	L1A	L1B	L2E	L2F	
Coaching embedded/used regularly with School Leaders	6	5	3	3	17
Regularly use informal coaching	2	5	2	4	13
Used to facilitate deeper powerful reflection/Organic/authentic/in the moment/Gain perspective	3	2	3	4	12
Facilitative questioning in school	3	6	1	2	12
Coaching way of thinking/Coaching way of being	3	5	2	1	11
Continue to develop formally with teaching staff at team level (Coach as a means of support)	5	6			11
Functional teams engaging with each other/impact on team and growing the team			2	8	10
Facilitative questioning used with students	1	5	2	2	10
Accelerated organization	1	1	4	1	7
Growing coaches in teaching staff – non-hierarchical	1	2		3	6

Overall, leaders in both schools identified that a 'coaching way of being' was evident at leadership level in both schools. Leaders' perceptions of how coaching was

working with their teaching staff were quite different. Leaders at School One identified that some work still needs to be completed with teachers to further develop this 'coaching way of thinking'. This was evident in the following comments:

> *We talk about coaching as a way of being we just want that to be our natural talk around here and for our leadership team it is predominantly, certainly for our senior leadership team it is, for our leadership team it is there pretty much all of the time, and it is building that culture within the team, the teachers* [L1E]

However, data from the interviews with School One participants suggested that a coaching approach was becoming embedded in School One because many teachers consciously used a coaching approach in their day to day informal interactions with one another. This was particularly obvious from Participant B's comments:

> *Quite a lot of us try to use coaching practices I suppose through the questions that we ask, through having a growth mindset about our own practice being able to reflect, be reflective practitioners and being open to being... or to being able to think, and our thinking being stretched about our practice* [L1B]

Furthermore, in both schools the coaching approach was perceived to be working well in class interactions between teachers and students. Teachers explained how they use a coaching approach in the classroom by promoting and empowering students to identify and act on new learning steps. This was evident in Participant A's comments:

> *Teachers are asking the kids to start thinking about how they're going, solutions focused thinking as opposed to telling the kids what to do. I've heard examples of that particularly this year where they're explaining how they are changing their talk with kids which is even more exciting* [L1A]

Coaching was identified as being embedded in School Two. School Two provided extra funded time which meant that formal coaching sessions were timetabled during the school day, across the week for a coach to meet with a team. The additional time used for coaching in School Two was identified as a catalyst for improving the way teams are working within the school. Participant E identified this in the following comment:

> *We've moved more to a collective coaching model because our hunch is we get better bang for buck, and what's been really interesting, as this is our second year into it, the incidental evidence would suggest our teams are much higher functioning, they're more vulnerable with one another there is high trust being formed* [L2E]
> *We've definitely seen this term much more acceleration in what the teams are implementing. I've seen more teams, this term, throw out their timetable and learning design faster and take risks faster than what I've ever seen before*

and I really think that that's come down to the headspace to dialogue, the coaching input [L2F]

Question Seven (Leaders): Is there a formal evaluation of coaching in your school?

Table 4.4 presents data pertaining to Question Seven. The responses from leaders shows variety across the categories in the ways that schools evaluate coaching.

Table 4.4 Leaders' descriptions of formal evaluation of coaching

Category	Number of responses per participant				Total
Formal evaluation types	School One		School Two		
	L1A	L1B	L2E	L2F	
Effective measures are in place	1		4	8	14
Impact on learners is evaluated	4		7	2	13
Feedback from teachers is collected	2		2	6	12
Reporting to School Board of Trustees is completed	3		2	3	10

School Two leaders identified that evidence was collected from across a range of areas to understand the effect of coaching in their school. They explained the different ways that they measure and evaluate coaching in their school. This was particularly evident in the following comments:

> *I guess I'm sitting and wanting to be evidenced about its impact, so we have coaching continuums, we've got teacher effectiveness continuums, we've got lots of means to measure impact and shift in practice. So, does it or doesn't it accelerate what we're ultimately trying to do* [L2E]

> *Over the last two years coaches have gathered that data from their coachees through the appraisal process and we pulled it all together into one doc to show the shift in [the coachee's] practice. There's also the teacher survey and there are specific questions to do with coaching in there to see what they believe their shift is in terms of their practice* [L2F]

Principals in both schools identified that they did have performance agreement goals with their Board of Trustees and that these findings were presented regularly to the Board as part of the monitoring section of their reports. In addition to these reports,

the Board of Trustees at School Two was provided with feedback from teachers so as to understand what the effect was of their investment for teachers on the ground. This was clear in the following comment:

> *We got feedback from the teachers and they stated their case to the Board to say, 'Is this a good initiative?', 'Is this is a worthwhile investment?', and 'Should we use this as our investment for next year?'* [L2F]

Leaders explained that they were using a range of student data to evaluate the impact for the learners. Data types ranged from gathering student voice relating to their learning, to using effect size to measure the impact for a cohort. This was clearly identified in Participant E's comments:

> *Some of those synergetic teams, we're getting like a 40% of their cohort would be getting an 18-month shift in a year in say writing and that was exciting because we've got some real priority learners that we want to accelerate learning for. We can't just keep doing what we've always done.* [L2E]

Question Eight (Leaders): What changes have you noticed with the school since coaching has been used?

Table 4.5 presents data pertaining to Question Eight. The responses identify some consistency between the two schools in how coaching improves collaboration and develops supportive environments.

Leaders spoke about the highly supportive and collaborative environments that were a feature of both schools. Leaders identified that in the past it had not been that way and that, as leaders, they reflected on what they needed to put in place to grow the culture in their schools. This was evident in Participant A and E's comments:

> *I started looking at coaching in my first year here. It didn't really take off and from my reflection of that I was a new principal in the school and I needed to build the trust in the relationships first so I bought it into early so I had to have it in, there was quite a lot of push back around the facilitative questioning type approach and then I, let it just sit and we just used facilitative questioning through our coaching trios for a couple of years and then we carried on and did the full model again with the leadership team so, that's been a series of developments over time* [L1A]

> *We had a hunch in an inquiry as the leadership group probably about 4 years ago. We said, 'how come that team is synergetic that team is synergetic and these ones just aren't? They're functioning but they're not amazing' and it boiled down to, if you like, that the teams that really hummed in the 'we'*

space, in the outside piece, had a high level of function, good communication systems you name it. There was a social sensitivity sort of an empathy norm that they identified with as being their subculture that's within the larger organisational culture. They worked really efficiently to get on with the core work like identifying priority learners and designing different learning and those teams are incredibly strength-based and at their centre they are very self-aware, they're learners at heart and they have a growth mindset [L2E]

Table 4.5 Leaders' observations of coaching's effect in their schools

Category	Number of responses per participant				Total
	School One		School Two		
	L1A	L1B	L2E	L2F	
Increased levels of collaboration/team function evident	4	5	10	5	24
Highly supportive environment developed	7	2	4	7	20
Professionals own and others capability developed	5	4	3	1	13
Lack of hierarchy evident	1	2	1	3	7
Staff empowered to reflect and modify practice	2		2		4
Teachers seeking one on one coaching	2			1	3
Retention of staff improved			2		2

Furthermore, time was spent developing collaborative cultures in the school. Some of the conditions that were identified by leaders as needing to be in place were, trust between the coach and the coachee, no hierarchy, or an equal sharing of power. This is identified in the comments below:

Because it has to be trust and you know the basis of coaching is all about trust and look you can coach without having a relationship because you can arguably coach someone who you don't even know, but when you're trying to

> *affect change and grow capability within the school it is very much around the relationships* [L1A]
>
> *Because coaching in my understanding of coaching is absolutely mutual there is no hierarchy so it is coming to a place as learners both together to make more meaning and sense in to grow out of it as a result* [L2E]

In addition to this, school leaders spoke of how important it was that they led and spent time communicating and building, at the start of each year, the conditions for coaching to work in the school. Participant E describes how they achieved this:

> *See 2 of our 3 days of teacher only days at the beginning of the year was all around collaboration and getting to know one another and our teams which I think sets the platform for the coaching to work well.* [L2E]

In fact, it became evident from conversations in School Two that collaboration was such an essential element of the school moving that all stakeholders were a part of setting the strategic direction:

> *It's always been collaborative, it's always been this is what we're thinking or this is part of the strategic direction, let's gather voice and then let's synthesise all of that voice and let's check the we've landed ok we've landed everybody agrees now we implement so.* [L2F]

School leaders identified that the change to their schools has been very positive. Participant A reflected on these changes to the teaching practice of the staff:

> *They thought they were performing really well in fact there was a lot of practice that actually wasn't ok, whereas now I've got a highly functioning staff, amazing, amazing teachers, doing amazing things and buying into that whole way of being as well* [L1A]

Question Nine (Leaders): How do you think coaching has affected teacher practice?

Question Four (Teachers): How has coaching influenced you to make changes to your practice?

Table 4.6 presents data pertaining to Question Nine for leaders and Question Four for teachers. The responses show some variance within and between leaders, teachers and schools in the way that coaching has affected a teacher's ability to inquire into their practice.

Table 4.6 Leaders' and teachers' comments of how coaching has affected their practice

Category	Number of responses per participant								Total
Changes identified	School One				School Two				
	L1A	L1B	T1C	T1D	L2E	L2F	T2G	T2H	
Increased ability to reflect deeply, and evaluate	2	7	10	9	3	7	13	11	62
Improved collaboration	4	5		4	10	5	2	7	37
Increased inquiry into practice			3	7		1	11	7	29
Increased agency	1		4		1	1	5	1	12

One idea that was identified by all teacher participants was the change that moving into a school that has a coaching environment had to their practice. They commented that in their previous schools they kept to themselves, didn't reflect as much and felt suspicious of people observing their practice. This was evident particularly in the following comment:

> *I don't know I feel like it's a sense of there wasn't this trust that you could go be vulnerable it was everyone did things behind closed doors, your practice wasn't open, if someone came to observe you it just felt like you were going to get in trouble if you weren't doing something right* [T2H]

Moreover, the sense of ownership, to develop their practice was such that they felt encouraged and supported to engage in deep reflections with all at their school to develop their teaching. This is illustrated best in Participant G's comment:

> *I'm completely different as a teacher, completely different! I am more open to trying new ideas, I challenge the norm more, I reflect so much more critically I'm so much more open to - to I guess not knowing* [T2G]

Seven participants commented about how the collaborative culture of the school supported them to take risks, reflect and evaluate the benefits of these changes for their learners. All teacher participants commented that they had informal conversations with colleagues about their failures in a way that they never would have in their previous schools. This was evident in the following comments:

> *I would never have done that in my last schools and gone and said to someone 'hey I'm actually struggling,' you just didn't do it - it wasn't part of the culture to be vulnerable. Here it's ok if you don't know, we're all in this together* [T2H]

> *What I really liked it put us in a place where we could be vulnerable with each other and having that support from the hub team or being able to say to someone 'how can I help you?' 'I know you've got a lot on your plate, how can I support you?'* [T2G]

> *We're so supportive here you never feel threatened so you know if the kids [say] I'm learning about aliens and they're not it doesn't matter it's a really non-threatening environment so you might say OK well how do you think you could improve it for that student and why did that happen* [T1C]

These coaching environments contributed to developing a supportive solution focused culture within the schools. An outcome of these supportive environment was the increased vulnerability teachers identified when seeking support from others:

> *You hear conversations around 'I'm struggling with these learners, I've tried x y and z, I need help from others and I'd like to hear different perspectives to see what I could I try differently'. There is very much an attitude of you don't give up on anybody here* [L2F]

> *I think most teachers here are not quick to blame the kids or blame the parents, but ask, what am I doing that's impacting this child? And, why they're not getting this certain thing? and that is not something I've ever experienced before and it definitely becomes just embedded in the culture* [T2H]

> *It's a really non-threatening environment so you might say, how do you think you could improve it for that student? or why did that happen?* [T1C]

Leaders identified that teachers were very open to engaging with them to reflect and use them as a 'sounding board' and share their successes and failures in a trusting way:

> *That's exactly what we are seeing so inquiries that our teachers are doing now are far deeper and they are looking for the things that they don't know and how we support them through that process with gathering different sorts of data or interviewing students and then providing them with that information to develop that inquiring sense of being as well* [L1E]

Question Ten (Leaders): What changes have you noticed since coaching has been used with teachers and students?
Question Eight (Teachers): How do you think that students have benefitted from you being coached in your class?

Teacher Question Eight and leader Question Ten have been presented together because they both focus on understanding how coaching has affected the students in the learning environment.

Table 4.7 contains responses pertaining to data collected in relation to Question Eight for teacher participants and Question Ten for leader participants. Responses show a large variance between the two schools. This is most evident in the data identifying how coaching conversations in School Two focus on the teacher understanding how effective they are in developing their learners. It is also evident in the development of student coaching programmes at School One.

Leaders and teachers both perceived that a significant benefit for students was the way that interactions between teachers and students occurred during classroom learning. It was identified that a questioning approach was focused on achieving goals identified in the school strategic plans that encouraged students to reflect on their learning, become solution focused and continued to develop their ability to ask effective questions about their learning:

> *It's a coaching talk probably it's putting the onus back on the child to start solving their problems. It's not that I've seen a great deal of that but I've heard teachers give examples of how their talk has changed the kids* [L1A]
> *I encourage deeper thinking and I'm certainly less willing to give an answer now than I would have done before* [L1B]

Furthermore, teachers identified that this questioning approach had caused students to develop agentic practices as their understanding of how to engage in learning conversations with their teachers improved. Participant G describes these changes:

> *It's completely changed the tone of the hub it's completely changed the tone of the groups. The kids are coming to me and saying, 'hey Mrs X I think I've got this, can I have the next thing' and they're taking that ownership which they weren't doing previously and I haven't seen in previous years which is - it's cool, I like it* [T2G]

Table 4.7 Perceived benefits to students

Category	Number of responses per participant								Total
Changes identified	School One				School Two				
	L1A	L1B	T1C	T1D	L2E	L2F	T2G	T2H	
Teacher/student questioning talk about learning	1	4	4	3	1	1	3	2	19
Teacher/teacher coaching conversations focused on understanding strategies to help learners		1			1	1	7	6	16
Coaching developing student centered approach to learning			1				7	6	14
Student voice as a data piece for teacher reflection evident	5		3		1		1	2	12
Improved teacher knowledge of student		2	1	3		1	1	2	10
Student coaching programmes (peer mediation)	6	1		2					9
Student motivation				2				3	5
Teacher/student relationships				1	1		1	1	4
Students coaching students		1		1	1		1		4
Students coaching their parents (presenting their work to parents)		2							2

Teachers identified that coaching had helped them to reflect more on aspects of their practice and how it affected students. Coaching conversations encouraged them to

think of activities that would better engage their students. This is reflected in the following comment:

> *I think it brings out the ultimate in your ability to dig deep to reflect on whether it's an element of practice or whether it's an element of trying to meet the needs of a particular student in a particular way it makes you really think about what you are doing it's makes you look for answers* [L1B]

In addition, coaching was identified as enabling teachers to clearly understand their role, problem solve how to be effective, and think deeply about their learners by ensuring that the learning process was clear for them:

> *But it made things a lot clearer and I understood, I guess the why behind my teaching and why I was doing it and what I wanted to get out of each lesson. So, it made it more explicit for me, which made it more explicit for my learners* [T2G]

Leaders and teachers identified that engaging with the students in their classes and learning teams was a key component in effective teacher reflection as well as modifying how teams were released to spend time formally with their coach:

> *But I know when I'm asking these kids for the teachers, they [the teachers] are eager for anything that they can get to improve their practice and for me the kids voice and what they say, is actually really important* [L1A]

> *It used to be one block and then half of the middle block and there was this weird 12 o'clock transition time and the voice from the students as well as from us was that that weird time meant that the kids basically were missing out on a good 45 minutes of learning. I know that doesn't sound like much but when you add that up over the weeks to us that's a lot of learning time in a term.* [T2H]

Another feature of the data was the way teachers engaged with colleagues to understand the students (and their families) that they were teaching. Understanding how to have an impact for particular individuals or groups meant teachers were able to engage and build meaningful relationships with them to greater effect:

> *I definitely think it's positive in how it shifts your practice, like I was saying earlier it's positive in that it's a shift - it definitely has a…has an impact on student achievement and when you watch those impact stories you see those kids that they have been working with directly affected if not a trickle on effect probably across the hub* [T2H]

> *Yeah and you feed off each other as well. I've got a boy in my class and I had a parent connect with his Mum this morning, but before the meeting I went to another teacher because I remembered her impact story - I asked her you've done two impact stories now on ESOL learners, I'm meeting with a mum today do you have any things that I might be able to try moving forward, that I*

can tell Mum I'm going to try and I can start embedding in what I'm doing [T2H]

Question 11 (Leaders): Do you coach teachers in your school?

Principal leaders identified that they did spend time coaching in their schools. They did this in a number of ways, but prioritised their coaching work with their senior leadership teams and front office staff:

> *The leadership team are my team, I mean it's very collective and it's non-hierarchical but you know we have just done a massive unpack of what's going well and what isn't for us as a team that's a coaching kind of a conversation* [L2E]

> *In a growing organisation I need to be mindful of who I invest my time in and so - the leadership team and the admin are my real core purpose* [L2E]

> *I'm doing a lot of work and coaching at the moment with the office staff at the moment. So, we are revisioning and have our elevator speech in illuminating some values and our vision for people's experience when walking into the office, so because they're our engine room - they really important* [L2E]

Whilst leaders main coaching time was spent working with their school leaders and administrators they did highlight the times that they coached individuals informally, or when they had concerns about staff members. These were particularly clear in the following comments:

> *I've got leaders who have done that to me in the past, I've got this problem I want to be coached through it please and then there are the times where someone walks in the door and says oh whatever and I will coach them informally but they go out going oh I've just [been coached], and away they go, so it's both* [L1A]

> *I mean there's one last year that I was really worried about so fortnightly on a Friday I coached her really and sorted out, it was more quite personal coaching around her personal life* [L2E]

School leaders identified that they coached a range of teaching teams and individuals. A core feature of the work in School Two was developing teaching staff into coaching roles. This was achieved by partnering with experienced coaches and developing their ability to coach groups of teachers in their school:

> *It's much more complex than just coaching one to one. There's an art to it compared to coaching one to one and that's been really interesting to see our other 3 coaches, who have only ever experienced coaching one to one, and we have been supporting and developing them to grow comfortable and build their capability to coach a team. At the start of this year said wow that's a step up in coaching, that's a real challenge. [L2F]*

Question 12 (Leaders): Is there anything that you would change about coaching in your school?

Table 4.8 contains responses pertaining to data collected in relation to Question 12 for leader participants and shows some variance between schools and across categories.

The two schools appear to be at different stages in developing their coaching cultures. Leader participants responses from School One to this question overwhelmingly identified the need to develop coaching further with the teaching group:

> *What we were talking about, so everyone talks about coaching around here now, and our challenge as a leadership team, we coach each other all the time, what we are trying to grow is that capability that staff are coaching each other all the time* [L1A]

> *The staff have all had the training so they will have the ability to coach. Do they coach in that formal way? No, because actually it's quite difficult and that's something I'm looking at how we grow more so they're all coaching all the time* [L1A]

Furthermore, they explained that building formal opportunities where teachers experienced coaching was a key way of achieving this. Leader participant's A and B identified how this could happen:

> *It's giving those opportunities to practice and think that keeps it on the boil because if I don't give them the opportunities and don't have the expectation that it will happen it won't happen* [L1A]

> *So [develop] a bit of a framework... because everybody's got a lot to think about so it becomes, it doesn't necessarily need to be routine, but you know in weeks 4 and 8 you touch base with your coach* [L1B]

Coaches being able to flexibly meet the needs of a team was identified as an area to develop in School Two. Coaches had begun to notice that teams were beginning to plan ahead, identify possible times or topics that could be stressful and as a result, wanted to work on addressing these areas with their coach.

> *So, teams have been mentioning when I'm with the teams that I'm coaching but some other teams have mentioned to other coaches 'can we dialogue around learner led conferences?' or 'can we dialogue around student agency?'. So, we realised we need to be more flexible about meeting the*

needs at the time. That this is where teams are wanting their coaching session. [L2F]

Table 4.8 Changes leaders' would make to improve coaching

Category	Number of responses per participant				Total
Changes identified	School One		School Two		
	L1A	L1B	L2E	L2F	
Formal opportunities to grow ability of the coaching	5	7		2	14
Continuing to develop coaching culture with teaching group	8	4		1	13
Putting follow-up conversations in place		9			9
Make it more obvious/formalise coaching sessions	1	2	1	1	5
Coaching community	2	2			4
Improved flexibility				4	4
Modelling a 'coaching way of being'	2				2
Finding the right question at the right time		2			2
Having timely conversations				2	2
Measuring improvement in teacher coaching	1				1
Consistency between coaches				1	1
The benefits of having one coach		1			1

Question One (Teachers): What are your perceptions of how is coaching used?

Table 4.9 contains responses pertaining to Question One for teachers and shows that there is some consistency between schools. The data in the first three categories illustrates how coaching is a natural way of interacting with others, formally and informally in both schools to inquire into teacher practice.

Table 4.9 Teachers' perceptions of coaching used in school

Response Categories Teacher perception of how coaching is used	Number of responses per participant School 1 T1C	T1D	School 2 T2G	T2H	Total
Coaching as a way of being/Informal coaching	6	6	6	3	21
Used to develop Professional Learning Teams	4	2	6	4	16
Coaching as a tool to build a culture where iterative inquiry occurs naturally	3	4	3	5	15
Empowers teachers	1		1	2	4
Funded extra time			2	2	4
Linked to appraisal/reflecting on observations	1	1			2
One off discussion	1				1

Data from the table show consistency between the two schools. Teachers identified that it was their 'way of being' particularly during interactions with students in their classes and when they were working with colleagues to reflect on the impact of their teaching.

> *I think it's at the point where it's become quite ingrained in our staff and I don't think most of them realise they're doing it… I don't think it happens all the time as a conscious conversation I think a lot of it is just organic and it's just how we roll here. We're all supporting each other, yes, I might be coaching you on*

> *this, but man I've got a lot to learn about this, so how do we support each other* [T2G]

Group coaching was the most commonly mentioned regular form of formal teacher coaching. Teachers identified that this developed their ability to work together effectively, offered them an insight into their colleagues' strengths and built effective professional relationships. Teacher Participant G expressed this thus:

> *So, because we work in hub teams being coached altogether to be the best collectively. It's really cool, it's very different to being coached one on one because you've got so many multiple perspectives but, yeah it's good, I'm an advocate for it* [T2G]

Question Two (Teachers): How does leadership support coaching in your school?

Table 4.10 identifies responses from teacher participants pertaining to Question Two for teachers. Overall, the table shows that coaching is used to support teachers to reflect deeply into their practice, both individually and in teams.

Table 4.10 Teachers' descriptions of how leaders support coaching

Response Categories Support for teachers	Number of responses per participant School 1		School 2		Total
	T1C	T1D	T2G	T2H	
Used to facilitate deeper powerful reflection/organic/authentic/in the moment/gain perspective	3	7	4	11	25
Coaching focus and support from a coach during PLC Teams meetings	4	2	6	4	16
Funded extra time			2	2	4
Select the aspect for team focus			1		1
Five-week cycles				1	1

Teacher participants identified that leaders mainly support coaching through their coaching at team or professional learning community level. Teachers explained leaders' support of coaching in a number of ways. These were particularly evident in Participant D's response below:

> *It's happening because people are modelling it and being encouraged to use it in staff meetings, in PLC groups, between the mentor teacher and the beginning teacher and those relationships with our team leader, all of those things* [T1D]

As a mechanism for encouraging deep iterative inquiry, teachers explained school leaders supported coaching to occur in the school in a number of ways. In School Two a catalyst in allowing deep iterative inquiry to occur was the funding of additional time to allow coaching conversations to occur with teachers. Participant H explains the impact that coaching has had:

> *So the coaching has completely revolutionised, I think, our teaching practices in terms of you actually have an opportunity to sit down with someone and talk about your practice, and in a safe way. I am open about my failings, or something I might be struggling in and it's actually helping you become a better teacher so that we can impact the students and raise their achievement which is what we are here for* [T2H]

Question Three (teachers) what have your experiences of coaching been in your school?

Table 4.11 contains responses to Question Three asked to teacher participants. Responses show variance between the teachers in the two schools.

Teacher responses to this question were fairly consistent across both schools. Experiences from School One participants identified that they mainly practiced coaching at a 'team' level. This was either as part of the Professional Learning Conversations (PLCs) happening in the hub or in groups they had nominated to belong to that have particular foci aligned to the school's strategic plan.

At School Two teachers identified a range of coaching experiences. Currently they experienced coaching based on the need that they identified whilst completing their SWOT analysis. They experienced coaching on a weekly basis during class learning time. Of interest here was the fact that whilst they selected the areas to focus on as a team, their coach was appointed for them by the school. A further area identified

was the factor of using high quality relievers from the same school to provide the cover for the teaching team to be released from classroom responsibilities together. As a result of using these teachers at School Two to cover release, a possible unintended consequence was that the participants expressed feeling reassured that their teaching and learning programmes would continue as they had planned. This therefore enabled them to completely focus on this coaching time. Participant G particularly identified this in the following comment:

> *When you know it's a dedicated time and your class are being really well looked after by expert teachers they're not just doing worksheets they're doing some really engaging learning. The teachers are often the ones have been here and gone away on maternity leave and there's this relationship piece with the kids already. It's not a reliever that they hate, it's all going to go to plan and you can actually switch from what's happening there to focus especially when your coach is there and be able to have those discussions* [T2G]

Table 4.11 Teachers' experiences of coaching

Response Categories Coaching experiences	Number of responses per participant School 1		School 2		Total
	T1C	T1D	T2G	T2H	
Coaching encourages deep reflection of professional practice	2	2	6	5	15
Coaching empowers teacher to start and continue to solve problems for self	5	1	7		13
Used as part of PLC Group	1	2	5	1	9
Resistance to being coached	1	3			4
Directly used with appraisals	3				3
Regular weekly coaching			2		2
Equal coach/coachee relationship		1			1
Coach selected for teams/teacher				1	1

Question Five (Teachers): Have you faced any difficulties?

Table 4.12 contains responses to Question Five asked to teacher participants.

Table 4.12 Difficulties faced by teachers

Category Difficulties identified	Number of responses School One		School Two		Total
	T1C	T1D	T2G	T2H	
Resistance/frustration to being coached evident	3	4	1		8
Little follow-up to coaching conversations identified	2			2	4
The challenge of being coached			3		3
Changing coaches				2	2
Time for 1-1 coaching	1			1	2
Non-critical friend as coach				1	1

Resistance to being coached and understanding the coaching model were two areas that participants identified as having experienced difficulties in. This is reflected in Participant C's comment:

> *I think I've experienced some resistance to it. A lot of people just think "Oh you're coaching me" and they realise if you're asking them a question that it's trying to get them to think for themselves and actually they don't want to think that themselves they actually want you to tell them the answer* [T1C]

Participants themselves identified times when being coached was frustrating for them, as is particularly obvious in the comment below:

> *Because we're really focused on coaching, informal coaching can also be annoying because you just go and ask, 'what do you want me to do here?' and then it starts 'well what do you think?' and 'what else just tell me?' and I'll say 'oh for goodness sakes stop coaching me it's not a coaching moment!' and you know 'just tell me what is it that I want' so they can be annoying* [T1D]

Not knowing if I was explaining it well enough that was quite frustrating and it kind of got to the point in our coaching relationship where I was like "I just need to know if I'm on the right track!" [T2G]

Two of the teacher participants identified that a lack of a follow-up to coaching conversations led to ideas being less likely to be implemented.

However, that didn't follow up into anything and so some of the ideas I had, I have implemented, but a lot of them I haven't and that's probably something that I need to be responsible for doing, but also if she, was to pull up on our appraisals she could say hey how many things from that last goal that you did, have you carried on, but that's again, that's the time thing [T1C]

If you don't have that coach check in with you every 2-3 weeks with kind of those guidelines and expectations it is really easy to let it slide [T2H]

Question Six (Teachers): Is there anything that your school could do to enhance the coaching systems?

Table 4.13 contains responses pertaining to Question Six and shows teacher responses mainly from School One in ways to enhance coaching.

Table 4.13 Teachers' ideas on ways to enhance coaching model in school

Category	Number of responses				Total
Changes identified	School One		School Two		
	T1C	T1D	T2G	T2H	
Regular formal opportunities to be coached	5	3		1	9
Put follow-up conversations in place	3	3			6
Allocate time to be coached	4			1	5
Choose own coach	2				2
Have it modelled		2			2
Coachee writing down next steps		1			1
Communicate the role of the coach clearly			1		1
Allocate 1-1 coach				1	1

Responses to this question from participants, almost solely from School One, identified three interrelated areas that could enhance coaching systems used at the school. The overwhelming response was having regular opportunities to meet with their coach and for these conversations to be followed up on. Participant C identifies this in her comments:

> *I'm realistic that you know you would love an hour coaching every week but that's just unrealistic but it was just a 15-minute thing I feel like it could be achievable and it would make a difference* [T1C]

Allocating time was identified as a way to enhance the role coaching has in the school.

> *If you had time allocated in the school day then you're not going to feel like you should be doing something else but a lot of the time you feel like you need to be doing other things* [T1C]

Furthermore, teacher participants identified how the coach/coachee relationship was a critical element for them in identifying and committing to the change they identified with their coach. Having regular coaching sessions with the coach would help in the following way:

> *But if you have a follow up coaching session you know that person is going to be asking you, 'so how are you going with your goal?' 'have you done those things that you said you were going to do'? because if they don't do that and don't follow up with you you're not accountable for it* [T1C]

> *It makes you more accountable doesn't it because if you know someone's going to ask you about it* [T1D]

Regular individual coaching also built reciprocity in the relationship. This was achieved because the coach was invested in the coaching relationship as identified by Participant H from School Two:

> *And then on top of that I think she really cares so she she'll email us during the week and say hey I was at a conference this week I know this guy was speaking you have to check him out he was talking about this, this and this and it links in with, so she's really good at finding exterior resources* [T2H]

Question Seven (Teachers): How would you rate coaching against other forms of professional development you've experienced?

Teacher participants did not identify coaching as a professional development approach. There was a consistency among teachers in that they viewed coaching as complementing professional development that they attended. They identified that coaching conversations allow them to reflect on the professional development, how they might implement this new learning into their teaching and finally to reflect on the benefits (if any) changes that they made had for their learners. This is evident in these comments:

> *Because for me if I go to an amazing PD and I get all these ideas that's great - but actually being able to talk it through with my coach or being able to try it in my hub situation and then discussing it with my coach and having those really critical reflective conversations, that's where the biggest shift has happened* [T2G]

> *Coaching brings in other elements of professional development because in my first year my need here was around assessment I've never used E-asTTle before and so there was heaps of coaching around data, data analysis, interpreting and with that, that meant going on different courses and coming back and feeding forward* [T2H]

Summary

In summary that three major themes that have emerged in relation to the four questions that framed this thesis study. They are: the tangible factors that affect coaching; the function of coaching as a means to develop collaborative teams that improves organisational efficiency; and the interpersonal behaviours and cognitive factors that affect coaching having an impact on teacher practice.

Chapter Five: Discussion of findings

This chapter will critically analyse and discuss the important findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Two: The discussion will be framed by the four research questions:

1) How do educational leaders resource coaching?
2) How do educational leaders give coaching the best chance of working?
3) In what ways do teachers perceive that coaching has affected their teaching practice?
4) What are the perceived enablers and barriers to effective coaching?

Three themes emerged from the data:

i. There are a number of tangible factors that affect the quality and impact of coaching; and
ii. That coaching is a strategic function designed to achieve transformational change for an organisation; and
iii. There are a number of interpersonal behaviours that affect coaching having an impact on teacher practice.

These three themes will structure the discussion in this chapter. This chapter will explore and examine these three central themes in relation to the literature and incorporate them into a model (figure 5.1) that depicts the relationship between these themes. Also explored in this chapter is how this interrelationship contributes to the current knowledge in the field of the ways in which coaching influences primary school teachers' practice.

To begin this discussion of the research findings, it is important to acknowledge the participants' experiences of coaching in their schools based on their interpretations. Also relevant is how participants ranged from school principals to teachers. Due to the variance in roles, coach and coachee, rich data were able to be collected that provided a broader, multiple perspective picture of how coaching affected teachers than if this research had solely focused on school leaders. However, three themes did clearly emerge from the findings of this research within each question and these will be examined below.

The tangible factors that affect the quality and impact of coaching

This section is concerned with the tangible factors that affect coaching. Tangible factors are those that are visible and easily quantifiable, such as the use of time, targeted resources, the expenditure of money, ensuring coaches are adequately trained or qualified, providing capable relief teachers and the provision of communal spaces. These key ideas were easily identified by the participants in the findings and this section will critically analyse how these tangible factors increase or reduce the impact of coaching as a tool to improving teachers' practices.

The findings of this research concur with the literature stating that for coaching to be effective, school leaders should allow time within the school day for teachers and coaches to meet (Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Knight, 2009a; Leat et al., 2012; Soisang & Wongwanich, 2013). It was quite explicit in the findings that each school used time in its own way. This difference between schools was most clearly highlighted in the additional time that School Two provided during the teaching day for groups of teachers to meet with their coaches. However, the provision of this additional time came with clear mandated rules in how it was to be used. Teacher coachees explained that they used coaching as a starting point for the teaching teams to reflect on their group's selected strategic focus area, followed by a discussion within the team that identified their next steps. Teachers valued this extra time together to meet during teaching time as it removed the pressure of finding time for coaching outside of teacher contact hours. This concurs with Knight (2009a) who posits that the single biggest way to increase the effectiveness of coaching is to make time for it to happen. Furthermore, the scheduling of time for the teachers to meet weekly during the school day was perceived by teachers as a commitment from school leaders to enable teachers to continually refine and make changes to their practice through the function of coaching. By comparison, when time is not given for coaching sessions this results in teachers having to find time for these conversations and sessions to happen, which therefore adds yet another task to do to in an already full workload.

Supporting literature cites this lack of time as a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of coaching relationships (Cullingford, 2006; Ellington et al., 2017;

Knight, 2009a). Additional examples were evident in the findings where teachers felt frustrated when time was irregular or coaching sessions were missed. Teachers lamented the lack of time to meet with their coach to follow-up on their identified next steps and that this was detrimental to them implementing changes that they had identified during an initial coaching session. Furthermore, Robertson (2005) notes that time is critical to building the relationship between the coach and the coachee and that once this is established that such partnerships can reflect on all areas of the coachee's practice. Making time to meet with their coach was seen by teacher coachees as a fundamental area for them in developing their practice. The regularity (or not) with which coachees met with their coach was identified by coachee participants as a catalyst for determining the effectiveness of any changes becoming embedded.

The practice of leaders allocating resources to support coaching was influential in coaching's effectiveness. Each school targeted resources by engaging with an external education consultancy company to provide training and ongoing support to coaches to ensure that coaching was implemented as successfully as possible. Training coaches was highlighted by a number of authors as being essential to coaches understanding their role and being suitably skilled in supporting the coachee to make manageable changes to their practice (Cordingly & Buckler, 2012; Ellington et al., 2017; Gallant & Gilham, 2014). Gallant and Gilham (2014) note that coachees' developmental needs vary depending on their experience and highlight the importance of the coach understanding and being skilled enough to address these needs. Furthermore, school leaders understood that using theoretically researched and tested coaching models was important for coaching in schools. Schools differed in how they achieved this from providing one-to-one coach support for coaches, to encouraging their membership and participation in coaching groups. Smith (2007) explains that such support groups provide status and safety for people, in this case coaches, to receive collegial support as well as developing and testing ideas and seeking solutions. Allocation of appropriate resources allows this professional development to be implemented and sustained.

The shared belief of leaders in coaches needing to be qualified justified their investment of time and money to achieve this. Qualifications were offered as a suite of support by the educational provider as a next step in the development of coaches. Whilst the literature highlights the pitfalls that can occur when training is not undertaken (Farmery, 2006; Fletcher, 2012; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Soisang & Wongwanich, 2013) there was no evidence in the literature that identified coaching qualifications as being a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of the coaches. There was evidence in the literature that encouraged coaches to focus on considering the coaching model as one piece of the support that they can offer the coachee (Passmore, 2006). Passmore (2006) identifies that using a coaching model alone only goes so far in helping people to change. Therefore, leaders should consider whether investing in teachers' time to achieve a coaching qualification is the best use of monetary resources and expecting coaching qualifications to be a factor that achieves the outcome they desire for all teachers in their schools.

Another aspect of effective resourcing for coaching identified in this research is that of providing capable staff to teach classes while teachers are released for coaching meetings. This aspect is not clearly evident in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. However, the findings suggest that this was very important in enabling teacher coachees to focus on the coaching sessions fully. There is a range of literature that cites teachers experiencing feelings of guilt when they are away from their students during these scheduled times (Knight, 2009a; Lofthouse et al., 2010). Lofthouse et al. (2010) explain that there are significant challenges faced by schools in scheduling coaching sessions at a conducive time without one or both coaching participants feeling guilt. However, this was not evident in any of the data collected at School Two which suggests that coachee participants had no concerns regarding relief teachers. Such confidence resulted in feelings of high trust which is identified as an 'intangible' factor in the model (figure 5.1). When teachers were able to trust that relievers had positive relationships with students and could deliver their programmes as they intended without putting the progress of the students at risk, they could fully participate in coaching sessions. For the leader of School Two this was a deliberate choice to employ teachers returning from leave back into the school. Moreover, this

was further evidence of the value that this leader participant placed on creating a communal space for coaching to happen.

Reintegrating teachers who have been on leave back into a school is fundamental to the continual growth of the organisation. However, to enable such actions to occur requires significant monetary investment from the school. Knight (2012) identifies that the true cost of coaching can run into thousands of dollars per annum. The findings suggest that school leaders need to understand and carefully consider all aspects of this investment. Therefore, understanding the multilayered costs of coaching initiatives are yet another area that school leaders need to consider if coaching is to have a greater chance of being successful.

Overall, the findings suggest that addressing tangible factors are critical in enabling coaching to have the desired impact in improving teacher practice. These tangible resources need to be considered so they can have the intended impact of enabling the coaching environment to positively influence teacher practice. Although each school in this research had its own practice in regard to the provision and use of time for coaching, there was consistency in the way that they invested resources into training their coaches. However, the findings also highlight that when tangible factors are not considered by school leaders this can stop coaching from having a positive impact on developing teacher practice that leaders intend.

The model (figure 5.1) below has developed from the tangibles of coaching and identifies key areas acknowledged in this research from the findings presented in Chapter Four. Some tangibles were identified from the findings and demonstrate how they enable coaching to occur. Others were not as evident, such as the receptivity of the coachee. The next two sections of this chapter will investigate how these tangibles help to create the final two major themes identified in this research, namely: coaching as a strategic function designed to achieve transformational change for an organisation; and the interpersonal behaviours that affect coaching success.

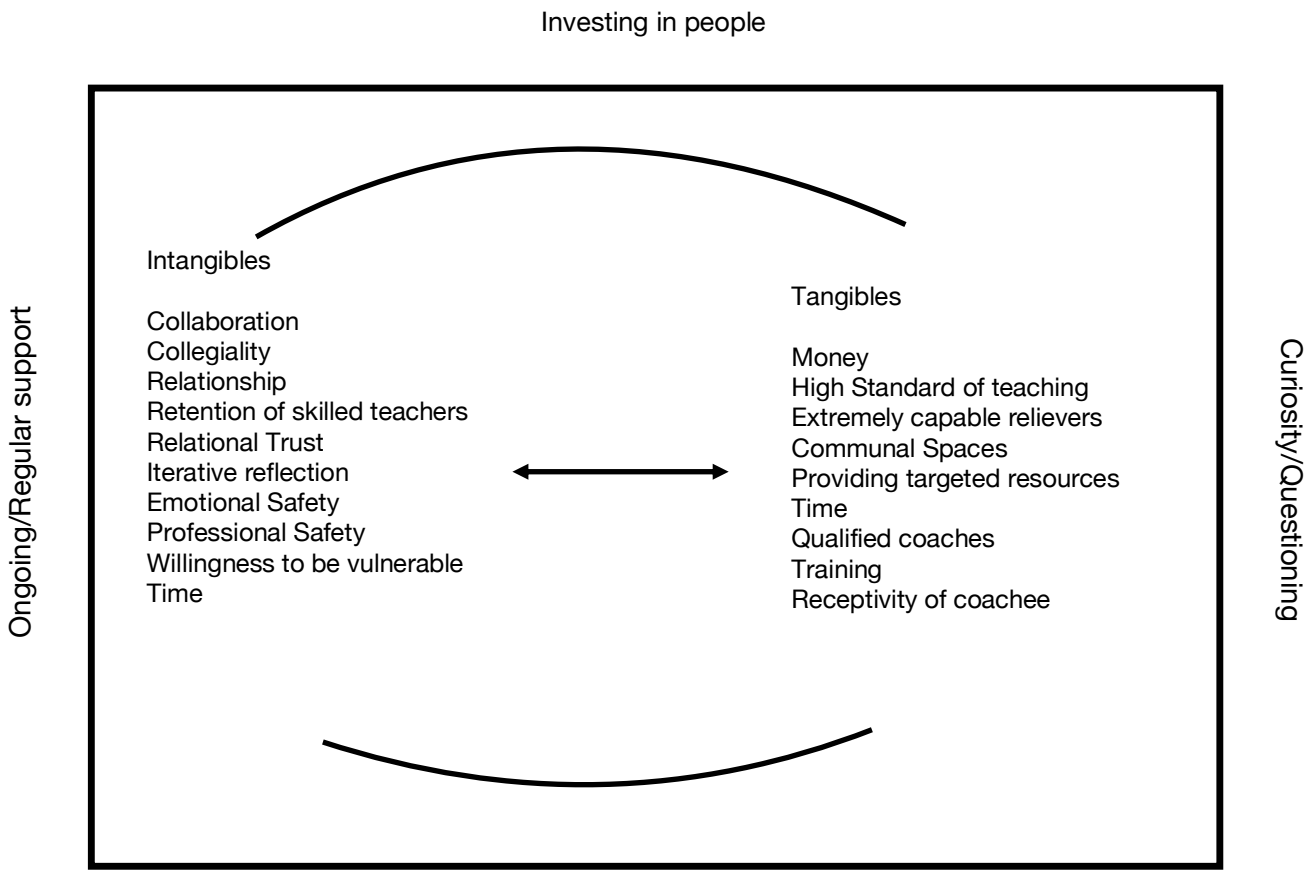

Figure 5.1: Leadership modelling and leading the change

Coaching as a strategic function designed to achieve transformational change for an organisation

The actions both leaders took towards coaching demonstrated their underlying belief in the changes that they sought to make. Before strategically planning the process of change design, leaders were required to identify the desired outcomes for their environments. Supporting literature reiterates the importance of school leaders understanding that the change process is a multilayered activity affected by a range of inter-related variables and that schools are multilayered systems (Fullan, 2007; Thomson, 2010). Furthermore, having coaching at the center of school leaders' thought processes on school development and change is an idea which aligns with a range of literature that highlights the importance of this (Fletcher, 2012; Lofthouse et al., 2010). Therefore, leaders need to clearly understand the change that they desire as well as the multifaceted aspects they need to address when creating the conditions for such changes to be made in their institutions.

Overall, coaching was described as being embedded to varying degrees in the participants' schools. School leaders recognised during the process of establishing coaching in their schools that they developed the intangible factor of creating a culture of iterative reflection which was evident in these schools. When different coaching processes were used for different staff members, the 'practice' of coaching was viewed as an important part of school culture. Furthermore, school leaders deeply believed in the individual teacher's ability to identify changes that improved their practice and promoted their autonomy to do so. School leaders achieved this through developing the way that conversations between peers both informally and formally, were focused on empowering teachers to reflect, refine and continuously improve their teaching practice. This culture appears to be more developed in School Two, likely as a direct consequence of the investment that has been made and commented on previously in this chapter. Nevertheless, the culture achieved in both schools is one where the leaders believed in the coaching process as a key way to develop iterative inquiry for their teaching teams.

The ways in which coaching was used at the participant schools was linked to change processes and pace. School leaders understood that a change process is a series of iterations that evolved over time into the current coaching approach and model used. The principal of School One described how the strategic approach taken in establishing coaching as a tool in her early years was met with extreme dissonance from teachers. In School One, a slower approach to change was required because the staff at the time were not open to change as they did not believe there were any problems either in their environment or in how they were teaching. Cox (2015) explains that it is only when adults face a dilemma or their norms are disrupted in some way that they become coachable. For this leader, it meant applying a facilitative questioning approach to help teachers reflect on their current realities. A facilitative questioning approach is one that is designed to encourage a teacher to inquire into their practice, consider different options and identify areas for them to refine.

Building relational trust is widely recognised and identified in the literature as being a key critical component to the success or failure of change approaches, such as coaching, making a positive difference in an environment (Cornett & Knight, 2008; Coyle, 2018; Knight, 2009b; Price, 2009). It was evident from the findings that a link existed between the level of relational trust in a coaching partnership and the perceived degree of positive impact on a teacher's practice. This research shows that building high trust relationships was critical before any large-scale coaching initiative or changes could be started. Furthermore, leaders did this when they demonstrated their commitment to modelling and leading the change in their schools. A key finding of Robinson et al. (2009) states when leaders are involved and participated in teacher learning and development as well as setting the norms, that this was associated with greater levels of change in student outcomes. Additional literature from Kraft and Blazar (2017) and Timperley et al. (2007) supports the critical role of leaders in developing and leading such changes to the school culture by influencing and fostering commitment from the staff to achieve successful outcomes for all.

Developing self-sustaining systems that promote iterative inquiry was identified by leader and teacher participants alike as a fundamental goal of coaching. Creating such a system required support for teachers to inquire effectively into their practice. Robertson (2015) posits that the greatest power of leadership is to provide a space for teachers to develop their ability to continually reflect. Further supporting literature reinforces the importance of coaching encouraging a continual reflection by teachers in order to address and refine their practice (Ellington, Whitenack, & Edwards, 2017; Lu, 2010; Passmore, 2006; Robertson, 2015). Therefore, leaders should show deliberate intent to create the space and time for teams to collaborate together. Time is identifiable as a critical element that enables teaching teams to develop coaching cultures in a school. Also, developing highly collaborative teams is an area which school leaders explain is essential to innovative learning environments functioning effectively. An innovative learning environment is described as a future focused space that encourages collaboration and inquiry for both the learners and teachers (Ministry of Education, 2019). Research focusing on developing collective teacher efficacy (CTE) was used to underpin and justify this decision to focus on coaching

teams. Hattie (2015) highlights the impact of CTE in building highly effective teacher teams by focusing on ways to accelerate student achievement. Another aspect evident in this research was that an environment focused on developing CTE could only function effectively if schools allocate sufficient amounts of time for teams to collaborate. Leaders in this study, cited that developing CTE in teaching teams resulted in teachers becoming increasingly vulnerable with one another, trying new things faster and reflecting more regularly and informally to continually refine their practice. School leaders' in this study identified that added time was a critical component part in growing the collective efficacy in teacher teams and organisation.

To achieve the strategic objectives of the school, school leaders in this study used coaching as a mandated approach with groups of teachers. A significant amount of literature cites the negative consequences of imposing collegiality and forcing teachers into such relationships (Boyatzis et al., 2013; Fletcher, 2012; Hargreaves & Skelton, 2012; Knight, 2009a; Lofthouse et al., 2010). Hargreaves and Skelton (2012) explain that when coaching is imposed on teachers that this can be to steer an agenda imposed by the school and lead to a one-sided coaching conversation. Knight (2009a) highlights that when coaching is mandated that teachers can experience feelings of being punished. Some negative reactions identified in this research towards coaching experienced by teachers included colleagues putting coaching down by joking with them when coaching is attempted informally. However, there is evidence from this research that favours the mandated coaching approach. The negative consequences of a mandated approach to coaching were avoided because leaders proactively engaged with their whole teaching staff. This engagement included being transparent in the purpose of coaching and by seeking teacher input into the strategic direction and goals of the school. When teachers were involved in reviewing and setting the charter and strategic direction for their school they felt their contributions are valued and heard by school leaders. Furthermore, they had greater ownership of the strategic goals of the school.

When selecting areas of the strategic plan to focus on through coaching, professional choice was a critical aspect. This is another feature from the data in this research that reduced the negative effects of mandating coaching. When teachers

had the choice of the group that they wanted to join or area that they chose to focus on developing then they were more likely to engage. This aligns more closely with van Nieuwerburgh (2012) who identifies the coachee should have the choice to select their area that they want to develop. Additionally, teacher coachees valued having the time, space and opportunity to work with their coach and teams. There was evidence of the highly collegial conversations that happened during these additional release times both when coached and when spending time in dialogue following the formal coaching session as a team. However, investing money into extra time for coaching necessitates measuring the impact of such interventions. This requires leaders and teachers to measure the effect that coaching is having on teacher improvement.

Overall it is evident in this research that the function of coaching is a multipurpose tool which develops reflection, encourages vulnerability and works towards the goals of the organisation.

The interpersonal behaviours that affect coaching having an impact on teacher practice

In relation to my findings, interpersonal behaviours relate to the factors that influenced coaching practices as a result of the interactions between leaders and teachers. The interpersonal level is inclusive of the relationships between people through their communication and interactions, approachability, understanding and compassion. Aside from the tangible factors and function of coaching as a means of developing collaborative teams, the findings revealed shared perceptions and experiences around how coaching can shape practice through the development of relationships. Whether it was communicating with a coach, team, leaders, students or parents, having effective interpersonal skills was found to be an essential ability. The ability to engage in coaching conversations because of a hunch or curiosity as well as with regular, ongoing support can be classified as developing professional capital.

Professional capital in education is concerned with developing three types of capital: human, an individual's talents or areas of strength; social, the ability of the group;

and decisional, the ability of the person to make judgements (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explain that developing human capital is best achieved through developing the group, team and community. This literature aligns with the actions of school leaders who were focused on building the ability of the team to function effectively with one another. Teachers indicated that regular coaching interactions, formal and informal, created professional safety and vulnerability for them as coachees through the conversations that encourage reflection and refinement to areas of teaching practice. Developing team function was found to be a critical component of effective coaching sessions. Continually refining the ability of the team to work together aligns with findings of Hattie (2015), who describes professional capital as CTE. Hattie (2015) explains that CTE has the largest single impact for improving students' academic learning. Developing professional capital through interacting regularly with teaching peers formally and informally helps to advance the efficiency of the team and organisation. It is evident from the findings that a teacher's ability to develop iterative inquiry into individual and team practice was supported through regular coaching interactions. Furthermore, developing professional capital was a fundamental element that school leaders needed to continually develop to ensure their organisations functioned effectively for their entire learning community.

There is strong evidence in the literature that highlights the positive benefits of leaders with high levels of positive interpersonal behaviours. Such behaviours should specifically provide caring supportive environments that focus on developing the needs of the individual and team as well as believing in them (Beattie et al., 2014; Blackman, 2010; Hamlin et al., 2009; Kennedy, 2005). Hamlin et al. (2009) posits that truly effective leaders are those who take coaching into the heart of their practice and exhibit behaviours that show their genuine level of empathy and concern. Similarly, Kennedy (2005) concludes that the coach and coachee relationship is focused on providing teachers with leadership and instruction, rather than evaluation and criticism. The crucial element of effective coaching relationships is the quality of the interpersonal relationships, specifically well-developed communication. Principal leaders in this research demonstrated their belief and commitment to coaching and developing others and it was inferred that they felt an

obligation to maintain their commitment to continually improving the environment for the learners to be nurtured in. This is best demonstrated in the deliberate way that leaders repeatedly and consciously modelled the communication that they needed to see from others through the way that they engaged with the coachee using an authentic coaching dialogue. For coaching to work it is critical to communicate with others in a way that engages and honours people and values their contribution.

The behaviours of leaders when developing school environments where coaching could have a positive impact was mainly identified as being at a strategic level. These behaviours are considered as interpersonal skills because they are focused on developing an environment for teachers to work in effectively. Features of such an environment are those that provide the coachee with the autonomy to make incremental changes through formal and informal coaching conversations. Furthermore, leaders viewed the implementation of a coaching approach as a continuous form of professional development and that it took time to create such environments. Leaders understood that coaching interactions, approaches and models changed over time, but that a key to the success of coaching was being clear about why and how the model or approach was to be used. Literature that supports this approach found that when leaders are transparent in the purpose of how and why coaching is being used that this reduces levels of mistrust whilst allowing the coaching system to grow slowly and organically (Lofthouse et al., 2010; Smith & Lynch, 2014). Smith and Lynch (2014) describe this approach as one that is central to the leaders achieving the goals and mission of the organisation. Furthermore, it is considered an interpersonal behaviour as it is another way that leaders show teachers that they matter. Leaders who believe in being transparent with all staff and sharing in the decision-making process understand how critical this is to providing a trusting environment. Finally, Blackman (2010) explains that coaching should be seen as a continuous process that closes the gap between the current situation and the desired situation, as well as considering what the coachees interpersonal competencies are and what skills they wish to develop.

Increased levels of reflection and an ability to be vulnerable and engage with others at all levels of the organisation were features of effective coaching environments.

Indicators of these environments evident in the findings were the way that teachers felt totally supported and safe to openly identify areas they were struggling in. Another aspect of effective coaching environments was the way that teachers developed a belief in their ability to solve their own problems through regular reflective conversations. Teachers identified that it was through regular planned and spontaneous conversations with their coach that they were able to constantly refine and make positive changes to their teaching practice. Such shifts were identified in the findings in the coaching approach that teachers started to take with their students. Teachers who experience positive benefits from coaching have been found in this research to assimilate a coaching mindset into their teaching. These teachers are less likely to tell students the answer and instead become intrinsically motivated to adopt a coaching approach that prompts the student to reflect deeply on their learning and next steps. Teacher belief in the students' ability increases in much the same way that their coaches believed in them.

However, there was evidence from the research that identified a level of frustration in the move away from a one to one coach approach to group coaching. Whilst a team approach was beneficial for the group and school (to achieve strategic goals), for teachers this came at the expense of achieving their own professional goals. This manifested in feelings of frustration and acted as a barrier to coaching refining individual teacher practice. There was further evidence to suggest that school leaders needed to consider the importance of providing time and individual coaching sessions focused on building interpersonal relationships between coach and coachee. School leaders should build time for both team and individual coaching to occur as an important step when growing coaching in a school that focuses on improving the efficacy of the team and individual. The literature clearly supports the link between high levels of self-efficacy, strong professional relationships between the coach and the coachee and the self-reported job performance and increased goal orientation when time is available for coachees (Baron et al., 2011; Bozer et al., 2013; Cornett & Knight, 2008; Taylor et al., 2013; van Nieuwerburgh & Tong, 2013). The findings identified the potential benefits of taking a mixed coaching approach, specifically providing time for the group and individual to be coached, leaders can achieve the duel goals of achieving the strategic areas in the charter as well as

creating opportunities for individual teachers to develop and refine their practice. Doing so enables and develops the efficacy of the group and the individual.

Another finding of this research is that the link between effective cultures where teachers have high levels of self-efficacy, and staff retention. Bozer et al. (2013) identifies a beneficial consequence of having high self-efficacy for an organisation is retaining staff. School leaders commented on the numbers of staff that they retained and reintegrated back into their work force after periods of leave. The culture in School Two was identified in the data as a positive enabler for the participants wanting to return. Furthermore, coachee participants in both schools felt empowered because they had the autonomy to make improvements to their practice and were motivated to do so in ways that they had not been in previous primary school environments. This aligns with the literature that states that improved efficacy and cultures that develop interpersonal skills results in teachers having greater problem solving skills, increased confidence, an improved ability to change, better balance between work and home and reduced stress levels (Bozer et al., 2013; Smith & Lynch, 2014).

Effective school cultures are free from judgement. The literature cites the importance of coaching sessions being free from judgement and the coach not choosing the goals for the coachee (Lofthouse et al., 2010; Sammut, 2014). In this way the power must reside with the coachee if they are to choose the changes that they want to make to their practice. It was evident from the findings that school leaders believed in the teachers' ability to identify and make the changes which are needed to improve. Blackman (2010) considers this to be an interpersonal skill because leaders and coaches need to believe that the coachee is not only able to identify their goals but that they are the expert in what is achievable for them. Such an approach provides the impetus for teachers to set goals and identify the actions that they need to take to achieve them. A comprehensive coaching plan will encourage a certain type of non-judgmental communication via coaches when teachers lack commitment or are unwilling to change. This ensures that the coaching is given the best chance to be received by those who are un-receptive.

Interpersonal challenges were experienced between coach leaders and teachers. When staff refused or rebuked coaching this led to levels of frustration for those who believed in a coaching approach. This refusal to be coached was classed as an interpersonal behaviour because the teachers and leaders who experienced it saw it as part of their role to support the change for these teachers through their interactions and conversations. The challenges presented were multilayered. Some challenges faced by leaders were due to the low level of interpersonal skills exhibited by teachers in their schools who were unwilling to engage in coaching. For most school leaders and teachers interviewed, their concerns were the negative effects that such attitudes had towards coaching and their impact on the school environment. Teacher coachees identified that they often felt compelled to use a coaching approach because of the benefits that they had gained and wanted others to experience similar benefits. One effect of continued negativity that was identified in this research was that eventually teacher peers did not want to engage with these teachers. Those teachers unmotivated to participate often remained unaware of the changes that needed to be made to their professional practice and relationships which could affect those around them, their learners and the school.

Overall the data suggest that relationships and communication are the fundamental bases for building, and maintaining an effective coaching culture. Equally, further questions have been produced as a result of these findings: Can interpersonal skills such as forming working relationships be taught? How are teachers supported to engage with staff who do not want to be coached or reflect on their practice? Coaching on its own will not improve teachers' practice; it is through the professionally safe relationships that are developed between colleagues and coaches that coaching is able to start making an accelerated difference.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the three themes that emerged from the data in relation to literature presented in Chapter Two: (i) there are a number of tangible factors that affect the quality and impact of coaching; (ii) that coaching is a strategic function designed to achieve transformational change for an organisation; and (iii) there are a number of interpersonal behaviours that affect coaching having an impact on teacher

practice. In Chapter Six I will summarise the key issues identified in the findings and draw conclusions in response to the research questions. Considerations with regards to the limitations of the study will be drawn and recommendations for further practice and research will be made.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

In the previous chapter, the findings are discussed with support from the literature reviewed, and in relation to the aims of this research. This final chapter will provide an overview of the research study, draw overall conclusions, evaluate any limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

This study explored the role of coaching in primary school teachers' improved practice. It considered the perceptions and experiences of principals, teacher coaches and teacher coachees in relation to their experience of coaching models and approaches in their schools.

An overview of the research study

The overall aim of this research was to critically examine and investigate the influence of coaching in improving primary school teachers practice. The research was positioned within an interpretive paradigm and employed a qualitative approach to answer the four research questions. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight coaches and coachees from two different primary schools. The following section will outline the conclusions under the four subsidiary research questions that were the basis of this study.

Conclusions

Conclusion one

The overall effectiveness of coaching relies to a large extent on adequate resourcing. Those in leadership positions in both schools agreed that ensuring coaches were suitably trained and supported was fundamental to coaching sessions being effective. School leaders identified that investing in using a professional development provider with expertise in coach training was critical to developing effective coaches. The research also highlighted the very important need to provide capable staff to relieve in classrooms to allow teachers non-contact time during the school day to participate in coaching. Therefore, school leaders need to consider the ongoing support for school coaches and coachees through sufficient resourcing to ensure that coaching is effective.

Conclusion two

Educational leaders must seek input from all members of school staff when developing the focus areas for mandated group coaching. Despite the literature that warns of the negative effects of contrived collegiality when mandating any activity (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), seeking input from the teaching team reduces the chance of this happening. Teachers should be included in developing the strategic aims of the school Charter. This creates greater buy-in from teachers to use coaching to achieve such aims. Another way that educational leaders overcome a mandated approach is by providing choice for groups of teachers in areas that coaching sessions focus on.

Conclusion three

School leaders improve the chance of coaching having a greater effect when they provide choice and offer coaching to individual teachers. Providing one-to-one coaching opportunities has a better chance of meeting the professional individual goals of the teacher. Those in leadership positions need to ensure that coaching sessions are regular to ensure that coachees are supported to make the changes they identify. This study found that participants identified the positive professional benefits that they experienced when coached regularly. It also found that when individual coaching was irregular that this limited the effectiveness for them.

Conclusion four

Coaching is beneficial for teachers and positively impacts on their practice. Teachers agree that coaching encourages increased levels of assurance in their ability to reflect and engage with others to develop solutions and refine their practice. The research highlighted the increased levels of vulnerability and the relational trust teachers develop in their coaching environments. Other ways that coaching improved teacher practice was how teachers felt more assured in the way that they engage with their students. All participants subsequently used a coaching approach with their students after receiving coaching. This is an important conclusion because such an approach was observed to lead to higher levels of engagement and agency for students in their learning.

Conclusion five

Providing time is critical. When sufficient time is scheduled, coaching is likely to become well established at all levels of an organisation. Another feature of scheduling sufficient time is the improved feeling of well-being for teachers because coaching is not regarded by them as an add on. The tangible resourcing of time is also critical in accelerating the rate with which coaching is developed in a school. When time is not committed to and scheduled for the coach and the coachee to meet then this may lead to reduced effectiveness of coaching.

Strengths and limitations of the research study

The primary limitation of this research is the small number of research participants which is due to the nature and scope of this study. However, the findings may be transferable to other school contexts using coaching.

The second limitation of this study was the selection of two participating schools that had both been using coaching approaches and models for a long period of time and were considered as high performing schools. These schools had already established coaching as part of their iterative school systems. Another limiting factor was that the leaders were experienced and had periods of long service with their schools. These factors created limitations for this study because they may be considered outside the norm.

A strength of this study was that I was able to interview a principal, coach and two coachees from each school. Doing so meant that I could use rich data to understand similarities within the school and check for consistency in the participant responses. I was also able to compare between the two schools to understand similarities and differences that impacted on coaching effecting the coachees practice. A limitation of the study was that all participants could be described as New Zealand European or English in ethnicity. This could be a perceived as a strength of the study as this was conducted through my New Zealand European perspective which was similar to that of the participants. As a consequence, my data may not represent how effective coaching would be for teachers from other ethnicities.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have produced three recommendations for school leaders within the primary education sector in New Zealand. These findings may also be of relevance for teachers, school leaders, Boards of Trustees and the Ministry of Education.

Recommendation one

That school leaders understand and identify the multiple layers that effective coaching environments require whilst ensuring that these areas are adequately resourced to meet the dual needs of the individual and school. This may involve the following actions:

- ensuring that coaching receives adequate attention in annual strategic planning and budgeting processes;
- employing capable staff to release teachers during class time to participate in coaching sessions.

Recommendation two

That leaders include teachers in developing the Charter and setting the strategic goals of school. When leaders do this they ensure that they are transparent and communicate clearly the reasons for applying a coaching approach to developing these aims in their schools.

Recommendation three

That school leaders ensure that scheduled times are planned for during the year for coaching sessions to occur that provide opportunities for teachers to reflect with their coach that meet their diverse needs. Achieving this may involve school leaders scheduling time to allow coaching conversations to occur and committing to planning and resourcing this aspect to improve the effectiveness of coaching supports offered to primary school teachers.

Recommendations for further research

It would be beneficial to conduct similar research in schools that use a coaching model and approach and compare the results to the findings in this study. Further

research could be carried out to understand how effective coaching is in developing student agency and inquiry when used with students as part of everyday lessons.

Final conclusion

This study has explored the use of coaching and its role in improved primary school teacher practice in two primary schools in New Zealand. The findings and recommendations add to the body of literature relating to coaching approaches and will be available to school leaders and schools who may be interested in adding coaching to their existing system. Finally, there is a need for school leaders to take a considered approach when designing and implementing coaching into their schools that meets the diverse needs of their teachers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Principal letter - Permission to conduct research

Contact details
Michael Earl
michaele@orakei.school.nz
021 506 543
14 February 2018

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear XXXXX,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at your school. I am currently enrolled in the Masters of Educational Leadership at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) and am in the process of writing my Master's Thesis. The study is entitled 'The role of coaching in supporting primary school teachers' improved practice'.

It is my hope that as Principal you will allow me to visit your staff at a staff meeting to recruit 4 teachers and leaders involved in coaching to participate in a semi structured interview. Due to the nature of the study, I hope to recruit a school leader (yourself or another senior member of the leadership team), a teacher coach and two teachers who have received coaching to participate in an interview. Interested teachers and school leaders, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed at the time of the interviews and returned to the primary researcher at the beginning of the interview process.

If approval is granted, participants will complete the interview at an appropriate time and space at your school. If this is not possible then at an AUT facility closest to the participants will be selected. The interview process should take no longer than one hour. The interview will be transcribed and analysed for the thesis project and individual interviews of this study will remain absolutely confidential. This thesis study will be published and a copy of the findings will be made available to your school. No costs will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants.

If you agree, I should be very grateful if you would sign the Principal's permission form and return a copy to me in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. If you do not agree would you please notify me of this. I can most quickly be reached by email at michaele@orakei.school.nz.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Michael Earl

Appendix B: Principal's permission for access to the school form

Permission Form: Principal's permission for access to the school.

Project title: **The role of coaching in supporting primary school teachers' improved practice**

Project Supervisor: ***Alison Smith***

Researcher: ***Michael Earl***

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 13/02/ 2018.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (teachers' choice).
- I understand that the teachers who consent to participate in this research will be interviewed, and that the data gathered from these interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed and appropriately analysed.
- I understand that if teachers withdraw from the study then they will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to them removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of their data may not be possible.
- I agree for this research to take place in …… School.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ○ No ○

School representative's signature: .....

School representative's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):
.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 12 February 2018 was granted AUTEC Reference number 18/26

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix C: Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

13 February 2018

Project Title

The role of coaching in supporting primary school teachers' improved practice

An Invitation

Kia ora, my name is Michael Earl and I am conducting research into the relationship between coaching and teacher practice. Would you be interested in helping me by participating in a one hour interview? I have chosen the interview because I am interested in understanding your perceptions of how coaching of teachers is used at your school. The data that you provide will help me to write my thesis on this topic and achieve my Masters of Educational Leadership qualification. The findings may also be used by me to present at meetings or conference and to write articles.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Within your school all teachers and leaders who have been part of the coaching model have been invited to participate in this research. My hope is that four teachers or leaders from your school will apply to be a part of this research. I have set three criteria that I will use to select the participants. These criteria are listed below;

Criteria 1- requires the selection of a school leader who could be the principal or senior leader who has been involved in the implementation or continued development of coaching in the school
Criteria 2 – requires the selection of a teacher who has experienced being a coach
Criteria 3 – requires the selection of teachers who have had a minimum of two years' experience of being coached

I also have criteria that may exclude you from participating in my research. Meeting the criteria for exclusion will be any friends or colleagues with whom I currently have, or have had a personal or professional relationship with.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. Your principal has given me permission to approach your school staff to invite them to be a part of this research. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible. If you choose to participate and are successfully selected then you will be required to sign a consent

form. I will ask you to sign this consent form before we begin the semi-structured interview. By signing the consent form you will be indicating that your consent is both informed and voluntary.

What will happen in this research?

My research uses a qualitative approach. This methodology has been selected because my research findings will be guided by your experiences of how coaching has supported your teaching. The data will be collected using a semi- structured interview. The length of this interview will be approximately 45 minutes to one hour in duration. An audio recording of the interview will be made with your permission. I will ask you to review the transcribed interview to ensure that it is a true and accurate description of the conversation that took place. At this point you will also be able to modify or delete parts of the interview. The interview data will then be analysed and themes from the interview identified. The only people who will have access to the interview data will be myself or my supervisors. I will email you a summary of the findings from my research.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is not intended that you will experience any discomfort or feel at risk during the interview. You will be talking about your everyday activities at work and should you feel you don't want to answer a question then you don't have to.

What are the benefits?

I hope that you will enjoy your interview through an open and honest discussion and the sharing of information. It is intended that the research will benefit you and your school because you will be able to share your experiences of coaching and reflect on the ways, that coaching has affected your practice. A benefit for me is that your participation in the interview stage will be the important component in helping me to gather the data to write my thesis and complete my Masters of Education Leadership degree.

How will my privacy be protected?

Because your interview could be conducted at your school, it is possible that others may see that we are meeting and therefore your identity as a research participant may not be confidential. You may be more comfortable participating in the interview at a mutually agreed venue away from your school or an AUT facility closest to you. In either case, I will ensure that no information appears in the final thesis that is likely to identify you, your school, and other organisations or people to whom you might refer in your interview. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the thesis to maintain this confidentiality. Any and all conversations recorded between you and me during the interview will be confidential and only accessible by myself or my supervisors.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no monetary costs associated with participating in this research. The main cost to you will be the time taken to interview you which I estimate will be between 45 minutes to 1 hour.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have one week to respond to the invitation to participate in this research

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes, you will receive a copy of the transcript to ensure that it is an accurate record of the conversation that we had. You will have the opportunity at this point to amend any parts of it. You will also be

thanked in writing for your participation in this research. A summary of the findings will be made available to you and details for further information on how to obtain more this thesis research will be provided.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Alison Smith, Alison.smith@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext. 7363

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Michael Earl

michaele@orakei.school.nz

021 506 543

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Alison Smith

Alison.smith@aut.ac.nz

09 921 9999 ext. 7363

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 12 February 2018, AUTEC Reference number 18/26.

Appendix D: Indicative interview questions

Leader's questions

1. Is there a specific model of coaching that is used in your school?
2. How is coaching used in your school?
3. What have your experiences as a coach been of coaching in your school?
4. What are your perceptions of coaching?
5. What training/professional development do coaches receive?
6. What feedback do you get on your coaching in the school?
7. Have there been any hurdles for you during coaching?
8. How often do you work with your coachee?
9. Do you coach the same person?
10. How is the coach and coachee appointed to work with each other?
11. How do you feel about your relationship with your coachee?

Teacher's questions

1. What are your perceptions of coaching in your school?
2. How is coaching used in your school?
3. How does leadership support coaching in your school?
4. What have your experiences of coaching been in your school?
    - How often do you receive coaching
    - Is your coach the same person
    - Did you choose your coach or were they appointed to work with you
    - How do you feel about your relationship with your coach

5. How has coaching influenced you to make changes to your practice?
6. Have you faced any difficulties?
7. Is there anything that your school could do to enhance the coaching systems?
8. How would you rate coaching against other forms of professional development you have experienced, e.g. observing other teachers, attending courses
9. How do you think that the students benefitted from you being coached in your class?

Appendix E: Consent form

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: ***The role of coaching in supporting primary school teachers' improved practice***

Project Supervisor: ***Alison Smith***

Researcher: ***Michael Earl***

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 13 February 2018.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio- taped and transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.
- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ○ No ○

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name:.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on **12 February 2018** ***AUTEC Reference number*** **18/26.**

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.