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Literacy Coaching In The United States: Implications For Taiwan

Mei-Lan Lo

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LITERACY COACHING IN THE UNITED STATES: IMPLICATIONS FOR TAIWAN

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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May
2012

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This dissertation, submitted by Mei-lan Lo in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done, and is here by approved.

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Department Teaching and Learning

Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Mei-lan Lo
April 30, 2012

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To the literacy educators who want to make a difference

ABSTRACT

Literacy coaching has become a popular professional development approach in the United States over the last decade. To date, there has been little research on the different lived experiences and challenges of literacy coaches working in different contexts. Furthermore, research findings regarding the effectiveness of literacy coaching are inconclusive. To fill the gaps in the literature, this study was designed to explore the nature of literacy coaching in the United States and examine the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement, both from the perspective of literacy coaches and that of classroom teachers.

An embedded mixed methods research design, comprising a main strand and a supplemental strand, was adopted to explore the research questions. In the main strand, 3 literacy coaches were interviewed and observed; in the supplemental strand, 108 classroom teachers completed an online survey featuring both closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The findings of this study show that both literacy coaches and classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching is an effective type of professional development in improving teaching and learning. It is perceived as better than most of the previously used professional development methods (e.g., one-shot workshops, conferences, face-to-face college coursework, online college coursework, and reading professional literature) because literacy coaches can provide timely, on-site, continuous, and personalized

assistance to support teacher learning in a self-directed, reflective and collaborative way. The effectiveness of literacy coaching, however, depends in part on the skills and qualifications of literacy coaches, as well as the receptiveness of classroom teachers and the support of administrators. The findings also reveal that literacy coaching is a stressful and demanding job because in order to be effective, literacy coaches have to assume multiple, yet at times, undefined roles. The findings reveal the need for support of literacy coaches in order to help them survive and thrive. The implications of this study include providing a clear job description for coaches, maintaining appropriate coach-teacher ratio, educating administrators about literacy coaching, providing coaches with ongoing professional development opportunities, providing coaches with release time for networking, and providing teachers with the necessary support and release time for working with literacy coaches.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the backbone of education because quality teaching and learning are essential to the future of nations. In the United States, teacher professional development has been emphasized in many educational reforms, such as the Reading Excellence Act of 1998 under former President Bill Clinton, the Reading First provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 under former President George W. Bush, and the Race to the Top Fund under President Barak Obama. By allocating large amounts of federal funds to professional development, the U.S. government hopes to help teachers improve their knowledge and skills and ultimately enhance students' performance.

Traditionally, teachers learn by reading professional literature, by mentoring, and by participating in professional development activities such as workshops, conferences, and college coursework. In the last decade, literacy coaching has become a popular form of professional development. Generally speaking, school-based literacy coaches work side-by-side with individual teachers by modeling, co-planning, co-teaching, observing, and conferring about literacy instruction. Their jobs might also include facilitating workshops, grade-level meetings, and book studies. Many coaches are hired by administrators hoping to transform teaching and learning by fostering reflective teaching (Mraz, Algozzine, & Kissel, 2009). Under Reading First alone, more than 5,600 schools have hired full-time reading coaches to provide job-embedded, ongoing professional

development for teachers (Moss, Jacob, Boulay, Horst, & Poulos, 2006).

From the time literacy coaching started becoming popular in the United States, numerous studies have been dedicated to examining the roles, qualifications, and responsibilities of literacy coaches (Bean, 2009; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Elish-Piper & L'Allier's, 2011; International Reading Association, 2010; Mraz, Algozzine, & Kissel, 2009; Rogers & Rogers, 2007; Walpole & Blamey, 2008; Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Previous studies, however, have not addressed differences among coaches working in various contexts. In addition, because the effectiveness of literacy coaching has a profound impact on future literacy policy-making and school reform investments, there has been a widespread call for the investigation of literacy coaching effectiveness (Bean, 2009; Moran, 2007; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2007). Still, research findings to date regarding the effectiveness of literacy coaching are inconclusive. In addition to correlating students' reading gains to literacy coaching, as most current studies do (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Garet et al., 2008; Swartz, 2005; Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008; Walpole & Blamey, 2008), more empirical studies are needed to draw evidence from other stakeholders, particularly coaches and teachers because different voices will provide literacy leaders and policy makers with a more thorough understanding of literacy coaching and its effectiveness.

Inspired by the U.S. Reading Excellence Act and Reading First provisions, as well as other reading initiatives in developed countries such as Britain and Japan, the Taiwanese government has dispensed vast amounts of funding to promote reading in schools by equipping school libraries, recruiting manpower to hold reading activities, and training reading teachers (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2006). Although students now

have more access to books, and seem to enjoy participating in the various government-sponsored activities, Taiwanese students are generally not interested in reading and lack the capability for reading text-only books (i.e., books without illustrations) (Chen & Hung, 2012; Huang & Bai, 2008). This lack of both interest and capability calls for an improvement in literacy education in Taiwan, both in Chinese and English classes.

Conceptual Framework

Creswell (2007) asserts that good research requires making the author's assumptions, paradigms/worldviews, and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study. In the following discussion, I lay out the conceptual framework of this study by describing my professional experience, interests, as well as my philosophical assumptions and worldviews.

Before I came to the University of North Dakota (UND) to pursue my doctoral studies, several important educational reforms were initiated by the Taiwanese government, including the Grade 1-9 Curriculum¹ and the Foreign English Teacher Recruitment Program (FETRP). Having been involved with the Grade 1-9 Curriculum as a research assistant and a co-researcher with FETRP, I understood that the success of educational reforms was affected by many factors, including the amount of resources and personnel involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, teachers' perceptions and buy-in of the new policies, and the availability of information to the stakeholders. Among these factors, teachers' perceptions and buy-in of the new policies were particularly important because teachers are the means for carrying out the ideals

¹ The Grade 1-9 Curriculum was introduced in 2001. Its focuses were on integrating the curriculum, developing the school-based curriculum, and empowering teachers. For more information, please see Chapter II.

behind the new policies. If teachers are not receptive or not ready to change, educational reforms are doomed.

During my studies at UND, I have been inspired by several literacy educators. I have realized that literacy is the most essential part of education—it provides not only the fundamental skills for all walks of life but also the necessities for modern citizenship. More importantly, I believe that with proper guidance from effective teachers, reading and writing will no longer be as intimidating for students. My transformation from a reluctant reader and writer to one who is passionate about literacy instruction serves as the best testimony. As a critical pedagogue and a future literacy teacher educator in Taiwan, I take it as my responsibility to examine current literacy education in Taiwan and envision new possibilities.

As a pragmatist, I tend to reject the binary thinking between positivism (including postpositivism) and constructivism as distinguished according to methods (quantitative or qualitative), logic (deductive or inductive), and epistemology (subjective or objective) (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). On the contrary, I embrace both positivism and constructivism. Axiologically, I believe values play a significant role in interpreting results, and the degree to which values influence results and interpretations can be controlled by a researcher (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Ontologically, I agree there is an external reality; however, I do not think truth can be determined once and for all. Like other pragmatists, I care about the “achievement of the research—the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry—rather than antecedent conditions (as in postpositivism)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 22). Pragmatism is a very practical and applied research philosophy in that researchers can study both what interests them and what is of value to them, can

study it in the different ways that they deem appropriate, and can use the results in ways that can bring about positive consequences within their value systems (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

Several things have triggered my desire to explore the phenomenon of literacy coaching in the United States. Among them are the proliferation of literacy coaching in the United States, the need for a solution to improve literacy instruction in Taiwan, as well as my own professional experience, interests, philosophical assumptions, and worldviews. By conducting a mixed methods study, I hope the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies can complement each other, and result in more solid, rigorous research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the nature of literacy coaching in the United States and examine the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement from the perspectives of both literacy coaches and classroom teachers. Additionally, this study aimed to identify some effective professional development methods for Chinese and English literacy teachers in Taiwan.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study were twofold:

1. What is the nature of literacy coaching? Why and how is literacy coaching different from previous professional development methods? Do teachers perceive literacy coaching to be a better method of professional development than past methods? If so, why?
2. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers and literacy coaches regarding the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement?

Definitions of Terms

- Reading First Program

The Reading First Program, a cornerstone of the Bush administration's education legislation No Child Left Behind (NCLB), provided resources to states (and from states to selected districts and schools) to improve reading instruction using the following strategies: First, by adopting "scientifically based reading programs." Second, by offering comprehensive professional development on how to help struggling learners, as well as how to implement research-based reading instruction. Third, by providing diagnosis and prevention of early reading difficulties to struggling students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

- Reading Coaches, Literacy Coaches, and Instructional Coaches

Although sometimes the titles "reading coach," "literacy coach," and "instructional coach" are used interchangeably, they are slightly different depending on the circumstances. For instance, in Reading First schools, reading coaches mainly work with teachers in implementing their reading programs, and writing can be excluded from the responsibilities of a reading coach. In most schools, the coaches who are expected to assist teachers in improving their reading and writing instruction are usually called literacy coaches. Instructional coaches specialize in one or two of the following content areas: literacy, math, science, or social studies.

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

The DIBELS measures, including Initial Sounds Fluency (ISF), Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF), Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) were designed to assess early literacy development in phonological awareness,

phonics, and fluency (Center on Teaching and Learning, n. d.).

- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires all states to measure public schools' and districts' achievement and establish annual achievement targets accordingly. The overarching goal is for all students to meet or exceed standards in reading and mathematics by 2014. Each year, the states calculate the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of schools and districts to determine whether student performance is improved based on the established annual targets (Illinois State Board of Education, n. d.).

- The Five Pillars of Reading Instruction

The five pillars of reading instruction are also referred to as the five essential components of reading instruction. They are determined by the National Reading Panel, and consist of: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) reading fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension (Learning Point Associates, 2004).

- Peer Coaching

Peer coaching was popular in the 1980s and early 1990s (Toll, 2005). It is a simple, nonthreatening structure designed for teachers to observe, give feedback, and coach each other, one on one (Gottesman, 2000).

- Cognitive Coaching

Cognitive coaching, proposed by Costa and Garmson (1994, as cited in Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, & Garnier, 2011), focuses on eliciting and examining teachers' decisions and beliefs in the context of teaching to effect change in instruction.

- Mentoring

In education, mentoring is widely used to support new teachers in order to reduce attrition rates. According to Onchwari and Keengwe (2008), mentoring is “an intentional, nurturing, instructive, and supportive activity by an older, more experienced person that helps shape the growth and development of a younger, less experienced person” (p. 20).

- Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

PISA is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organization of industrialized countries. It evaluates the capabilities of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science literacy. PISA is administered every 3 years, and was first conducted in 2000. Each administration includes assessments of all three subjects, but assesses one of the subjects in depth (e.g., science in 2006, reading in 2009, and mathematics in 2012). Taiwan began participating in 2006 under the name of Chinese Taipei (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

PIRLS is coordinated by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). It is an international comparative study of the reading achievements, behaviors, and attitudes of 9-year-olds or fourth-graders. PIRLS is administered every five years and was first conducted in 35 jurisdictions (including countries and subnational education systems, such as the Canadian provinces and Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China) in 2001 and 45 in 2006. Taiwan first participated in 2006 under the name of Chinese Taipei (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

- The Cambridge English Exams

The Cambridge English exams are designed and administered by the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL), which is part of Cambridge Assessment, a non-profit department of the University of Cambridge and Europe's largest educational assessment organization. The Cambridge English exams evaluate the four language skills, (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) by adopting the principles and approaches of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an internationally recognized system for describing language ability (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, n.d.).

Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. In this chapter, I have provided a rationale for the study and presented the purpose of the study and research questions. Chapter II presents a review of the current literature on professional development, literacy coaching, adult learning theories, and literacy education in Taiwan to serve as a theoretical foundation for this research. Chapter III describes the research design of the study and details the data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter IV reports the findings of this study and answers the research questions. The last chapter, Chapter V, discusses the contributions and implications of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literacy coaching is a type of professional development. In order to be effective, literacy coaches must know how teachers learn best. In this chapter, I analyze and synthesize the literature on professional development, literacy coaching, and adult learning to provide a theoretical foundation for this study. At the end of the chapter, I also provide some background information about Taiwan for the readers' reference.

Professional Development for Teachers

Professional development for teachers, as defined by Guskey (2000), consists of “those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students” (p. 16). Traditionally, teachers carry out these activities to enhance their instructional knowledge and practices: reading professional literature, pursuing graduate studies by taking online or face-to-face courses, participating in workshops held by the district or state, attending conferences, joining study and professional groups, and networking with other teachers (Bean, 2009). In many schools that have induction programs, beginning teachers are assigned mentors to provide them with necessary support and to reduce attrition (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). A growing body of literature has indicated that by participating in professional development activities, teachers can change their attitudes and practices, and improve student learning

(Desimone, Porter, Garet Yoon, & Berman, 2002; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990; Taylor, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2005). Some of those activities, however, are not as effective as others. For instance, Nieto (2009) points out that:

Mandated professional development activities—in which administrators select the topics and teachers are a captive audience for a half or whole day—are notoriously unproductive. The result is often frustration and resentment on the part of teachers, dissatisfaction on the part of administrators, and a fruitless allocation of scarce resources. (p. 10)

In Smylie's (1989) study, teachers also indicated that the undergraduate education courses and in-service training provided by their school districts were not helpful (as cited in Grant, Young, & Montbriand, 2001).

To date, numerous studies have been dedicated to identifying the characteristics of effective professional development activities for teachers. In a recent status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad, the characteristics of effective professional development were identified:

1. It should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice.
2. It should focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content.
3. It should align with school improvement priorities and goals.
4. It should build strong working relationships among teachers.

In the report, the researchers also address “school-based coaching” and “mentoring and induction programs” as two promising strategies (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree,

Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009) for improving teacher learning. With the understanding that effective professional development activities should meet the aforementioned criteria, and that coaching and mentoring can be promising strategies to improve teacher learning, Table 1 is a comparison of literacy coaching with other professional development strategies based on the reviewed literature and my evaluation.

Table 1
Comparison of Literacy Coaching with Other Professional Development Strategies

	Literacy Coaching	Mentoring	One-shot Workshop	Conference	Face-to-Face College Coursework	Online College Coursework	Reading Professional Literature
Intensive	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ongoing	✓	✓					✓
Connected to Practices	✓	✓					✓
Focuses on Student Learning	✓						
Addresses the Teaching of Specific Curriculum Content	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aligns with School Improvement Priorities and Goals	✓		✓				
Builds Strong Working Relationships Among Teachers	✓	✓					

Literacy Coaching as a Professional Development Approach

In the United States, professional development for literacy teachers has been closely related to the mandates and the philosophies of literacy instruction. Table 2 represents excerpts from Grant, Young, and Montbriand's (2001) review of the history of professional development in reading instruction from 1800 to the beginning of the 21st century, as well as Bean's (2009) review of the role of reading specialists in schools, classrooms, and communities. Also included is the No Child Left Behind Act, Race to the Top addendum, and additional information not mentioned in their studies.

Table 2

Professional Development Approaches for Literacy Teachers in the United States

Period and Background	Professional Development Model	Reading Instruction
1800-1910s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European immigration • Industrialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers attending teacher institutes that consisted of motivational speakers or subject-matter information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Didactic—consisting of oral reading of texts with morals and lessons
1920s-1940s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive high schools becoming the norm • Illiterate students considered risk to society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training aimed at addressing supposed gaps left by teacher education programs and correcting supposed deficiencies in teachers’ home culture and personal background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent reading with an emphasis on comprehension • 1930s reading specialists in schools functioning as supervisors who worked with teachers to improve reading programs
1950s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post World War II • 1957 Russian satellite Sputnik • First wave of school reform of the 20th century 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remedial reading teachers for children who experienced difficulty in learning to read • Whole word method with basal readers consisting of highly controlled vocabulary
1960s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyndon’s Johnson’s War on Poverty • Civil rights • Professional development decline in quality and quantity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1965 Head Start • 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act: institutionalized reading teachers • 1965 Title I: funded compensatory programs, primarily in reading in high-poverty school districts

Table 2 Cont.

Period and Background	Professional Development Model	Reading Instruction
1970s		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.F. Skinner: Behaviorist principles • Public Law 90-142 (Special education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stauffer (1976): reading specialist serving as a consultant— serving in multiple roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepackaged programs of individualized instruction • 1974 Right-to-Read Program for all Americans
1980s		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1983 A Nation at Risk • The third wave of school reform: leadership, quality of instruction, and accountability • 1989 Goals 2000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College credits, teacher tests, teacher licenses, renewing certificates • Hunter Model (Madeline Hunter’s curriculum planning model) • Peer Coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1985 Becoming a Nation of Readers • Seeing reading as more holistic (dynamic, interactive, social) • Beginning of the “whole language versus phonics” wars
1990s		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability, teacher qualification and certification • Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Learning Community (PLC) • Cognitive Coaching • Mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1997 National Reading Panel: 5 areas and scientifically-based reading instruction • 1999 Reading Excellence Act:K-3 professional development, out-of-school tutoring, and family literacy
2000s		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2002 No Child Left Behind: standards, accountability, and high-stakes testing • Demand for highly qualified teacher, aids, and paraprofessionals • 2009 Race to the Top • Focus on competition in global economy and transformation of lowest-achieving schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Literacy Coaching • Train-the-trainer • Teaming • Book Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2002 Reading First: Research-based reading instructions • Fully-scripted reading curriculum • 2004 Response to Intervention (RTI)

Note. Adapted from Grant, Young, & Montbriand (2001) and Bean (2009).

The history not only reveals a shift from embedded knowledge to explicit and scientifically-based instruction, but also indicates that literacy coaching has its roots as early as the 1930s, when reading specialists were in place to supervise the reading program and work with teachers. After evolving into cognitive coaching, peer coaching, and mentoring (Costa & Garmston, 1994; Showers, 1984; Toll, 2005, 2006), literacy coaching was put in place in many schools as a professional development approach, especially after the *Reading Excellence Act* of 1998 and Reading First provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (International Reading Association, 2004). Many authors and researchers have published books and research reports focusing on this area of literacy (Bean, 2009; Mraz, Algozzine, & Kissel, 2009; Toll, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008).

Currently, the research related to literacy coaching is focused on the following aspects: (a) roles, qualifications, and responsibilities of literacy coaches; (b) coaching activities, coaching models, and effective coaching strategies; (c) preparation and support of literacy coaches; and (d) effectiveness of literacy coaching.

Roles, Qualifications, and Responsibilities of Literacy Coaches

Numerous studies have been dedicated to studying the roles, qualifications, and responsibilities of literacy coaches. For instance, Bean (2009) notes that literacy coaches assume the roles of instruction (e.g., modeling how to implement literacy practices, holding workshops, and facilitating study groups), assessment (e.g., interpreting assessment data to guide instruction), and leadership (e.g., planning and organizing the school-wide literacy programs and activities). Walpole and McKenna (2004) assert that literacy coaches are learners, grant writers, school-level planners, curriculum experts, researchers, and teachers. By interviewing 14 principals and 17 literacy coaches, Walpole

and Blamey (2008) identified that being a director and mentor are the dual roles of literacy coaches, which encompass many other roles as shown in Figure 1.

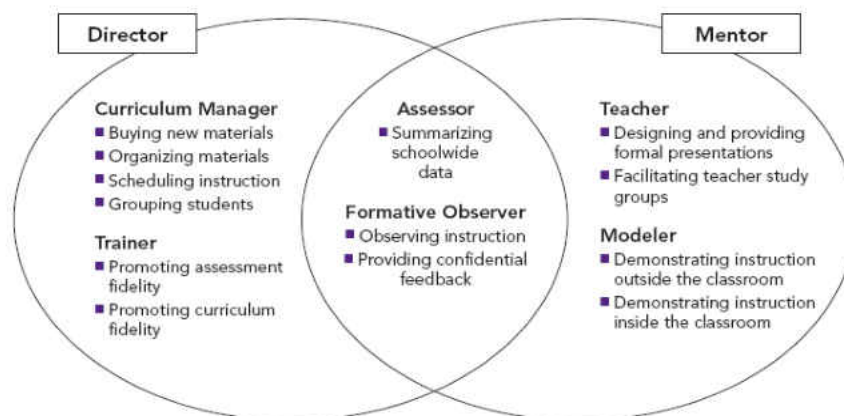


Figure 1. Multiple roles of literacy coaches. Adapted from Walpole & Blamey, 2008, p. 229.

In a recent study on Reading First reading coaches and the relationship between policy and practices, Coburn and Woulfin (2012) found that the political role of reading coaches goes far beyond their educational role. They argue that the coaches' educational role is to provide practical support for implementing new pedagogical approaches, whereas their political role is to pressure, persuade, and buffer teachers in response to the new policy [of Reading First]. As for literacy coaches' qualifications, Bean (2009) points out that knowledge of current theory and practice in literacy, experience, ability to work with adults, and effective interpersonal and leadership skills are essential. Rodgers and Rodgers (2007) state that a literacy coach should be someone who is a "highly qualified individual with at least a master's in reading, some understanding of professional development, and at least a few years of teaching experience" (p. xix). Furthermore,

Elish-Piper and L'Allier's (2011) study indicated that the type of reading credential held by a literacy coach (e.g., 24 credit hours versus 32 credit hours) is not a significant predictor of student reading gains.

In terms of literacy coaches and their responsibilities, Mraz, Algozzine, and Kissel (2009) state that coaches have to coach teachers on how to plan for instruction, develop manageable classrooms, deliver effective lessons, foster a collaborative professional environment, promote thinking through reflective inquiry, and use student data to guide instructional decisions. Additionally, in the International Reading Association's *Standards 2010: Reading Specialist/Literacy Coach* (2010), teaching, coaching, leading school reading programs, serving as a resource in reading and writing, providing professional development, working collaboratively with other professionals, and serving as advocates for students who struggle with reading, all fit into the profile.

Coaching Activities, Coaching Models, and Effective Coaching Strategies

Different coaching activities, including walk-throughs, focused classroom visits, observations, modeling, co-planning, co-teaching, conferring, administering and discussing assessment, leading study groups, facilitating grade-level meetings and literacy team meetings, and meeting with principals are undertaken by different literacy coaches depending on the context of their work (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Hanson, 2011; Moran, 2007). Generally speaking, literacy coaches use the gradual-release of responsibility model and/or stand-alone model when coaching (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Hanson, 2011). In the gradual-release of responsibility model, a coach “introduces a practice, demonstrates a lesson, co-teaches with the teacher, observes the teacher, and sees the practice sustained”

(Casey, 2006, as cited in Hanson, 2011, p. 78). In the stand-alone model, the coach does “a stand-alone demonstration or observation of a lesson with a brief conference before and after” (Hanson, 2011, p. 78). Elish-Piper and L’Allier (2011) propose a “Research-Based Model of Literacy Coaching” focused on promoting student reading gains. This model indicates that literacy coaches should spend their time in the following five areas: conferencing, administering and discussing assessments, modeling, observing, and working on the comprehension component (within the five reading pillars) with teachers.

Several coaching strategies are deemed to be effective, among which building a trusting relationship with teachers is highlighted in most of the research (Toll, 2005, 2008; Stover, Kissel, Haag & Shoniker, 2011). In addition, the ability to listen and learn and not be authoritarian and judgmental is essential to successful coaching (Toll, 2005). As former or current literacy coaches, Stover, Kissel, Haag, and Shoniker (2011) document a variety of strategies to provide differentiated coaching. For example, Kissel uses daybooks (also known as writing notebooks) as a space to let teachers reflect on teaching through quick-writes. Shoniker uses surveys to determine what teachers want and need, and then designs individual- or group- differentiated professional development sessions accordingly. Finally, with the teachers’ agreement, Haag uses videotapes to foster teachers’ reflection on teaching and set personal goals. Using videotapes as an intentional way for teachers to reflect on their own instruction is addressed in Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock’s (2009) study as well.

Preparation and Support of Literacy Coaches

There are many different training programs in place to prepare literacy coaches. For example, in their study, Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009) describe the

training of the 48 Minnesota Reading First coaches, including meeting approximately every five weeks to engage in professional learning on the five main areas of reading (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), reflecting on and refining the coaches' ability to facilitate coaching conversations (e.g., viewing video clips of each other's teaching and then initiating conversation with one another), using several protocols designed to collect data on instruction as the basis for their subsequent coaching conversation with teachers, and other elements of effective instruction (e.g., motivation, culturally responsive instruction, and differentiated instruction). In Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, and Garnier's (2011) study, the authors indicate how literacy teachers are prepared for Content-Focused Coaching (CFC) programs. CFC coaches engage in three days of professional learning per month over the course of the academic year. The training is designed to increase knowledge of the theory and research undergirding effective reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing instruction, by using techniques mentioned in *Questioning the Author* (Beck & McKeown, 2006) and *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). The training also focuses on building coaches' pedagogical skills as well as their ability to work with teachers effectively. During the training, the coaches are provided with opportunities to observe other coaches, to be observed, and to receive feedback regarding their enactment of a *Questioning the Author* lesson and the coaching of teachers. Besides the initial training, literacy coaches seek opportunities to learn through traditional educational settings, national and state conferences, and state- and district-level professional development sessions (Blamey, Meyer, & Walpole, 2008).

In terms of supporting literacy coaches, principals play an essential role.

Matsumura, Sartoris, Bickel, and Garnier (2011) posit that principals can support literacy coaches by publicly identifying the coach as a source of literacy expertise for teachers, granting a coach professional autonomy (in contrast to an extra pair of hands to carry out tasks at a principal's bidding), and participating thoroughly in the literacy program. Conversely, principals can impede the effectiveness of literacy coaching by demanding that coaches: perform administrative, supervisory, and managerial tasks; conduct extensive observation of teachers; provide pull-out instruction for small groups of students; and assist only teachers whose students have low test scores (Camburn, Kimball, & Lowenhaupt, 2008; Toll, 2007).

Effectiveness of Literacy Coaching

Recently, an increasing number of studies have been devoted to examining the effectiveness of literacy coaching. Research findings in this aspect, however, are inconclusive. For instance, literacy coaching, as shown in Garet et al.'s (2008) experimental study as well as Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, and Unlu's (2008) national evaluation of the Reading First initiative, did not result in higher testing scores in reading. Other research findings, however, did show that literacy coaching was associated with reading gains (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Swartz, 2005; Walpole & Blamey, 2008).

Bean and Isler (2008) indicate that researchers can use several ways to investigate the effectiveness of literacy coaching, including asking teachers about their perceptions of effective coaching, observing teacher and classroom practices for improvement in instruction, and correlating coaching with improvement in student achievement in the school. By relating student reading gains directly to literacy coaching, the researchers

mentioned above have responded to the previous call of evaluating literacy coaching effectiveness. Students' literacy achievement, however, can be affected by many other factors in addition to literacy coaching, such as:

...the method for determining student success; students' socioeconomic status; the correlation, or lack thereof, between tests and the curriculum; the cultural relevance of instruction and assessments; opportunities to learn; educational resources and funding; bias or lack of bias in curricula, instruction, materials, and assessments; safety in schools; children's health and nutrition; trauma or lack of trauma in students' lives and so on. (Toll, 2008, p. 84)

Hence, in addition to relating student achievement to literacy coaching, more research adopting other methods to evaluate literacy coaching effectiveness is needed.

Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, and Autio (2007) contend that "...there is a difference between being a coach and doing coaching" (p. iii). Having a coach at school does not necessarily mean that teachers and students will benefit from the coach. As more and more schools and districts are hiring literacy coaches to improve student achievement, literacy coaches' lived experiences and their challenges are important yet relatively overlooked. Voices from literacy coaches will add a valuable piece to the understanding of the nature of literacy coaching. As the direct goal of literacy coaching is to assist teachers in improving their instruction, literacy coaches and classroom teachers are the two key players in the process of literacy coaching. Their perspectives regarding the relationship among literacy coaching, teaching, and learning will contribute to an understanding of literacy coaching effectiveness.

Theories of Adult Learning

In their book, *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide (3rd ed.)*, Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) present five approaches to adult learning theories: behaviorist, humanist, cognitivist, social cognitivist, and constructivist. Among these, humanism and constructivism, which both emphasize the idea that the essence of adult learning is based on self-initiated change, are closely related to the nature of coaching.

Humanist Orientation

Humanist theorists, such as Maslow and Rogers, tend to believe that “human beings can control their own destiny; people are inherently good and will strive for a better world; people are free to act, and behavior is the consequence of human choice; people possess unlimited potential for growth and development” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 282). Maslow is considered the founder of humanistic psychology, and he proposed a theory of human motivation based on a hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow (1970), human needs, from the lowest level to the highest level—the physiological needs, the safety needs, the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs, and the self-actualization needs—are hierarchical and should be fulfilled in a progressive fashion. Sahakian (1984, as cited in Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) asserts that learning, from Maslow’s point of view, is a form of self-actualization; in other words, self-actualization is the goal of learning.

Rogers (1983, as cited in Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007) posits that significant learning, which leads to personal growth and development, has the following characteristics:

1. Personal involvement: The affective and cognitive aspects of a person should

be involved in the learning event.

2. Self-initiated: A sense of discovery must come from within.
3. Pervasive: The learning “makes a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner.”
4. Evaluated by the learner: The learner can best determine whether the experience is meeting a need.
5. Essence is meaning: When experiential learning takes place, its meaning to the learner becomes incorporated into the total experience. (p. 283)

The humanist orientation of learning recognizes human potential for growth and development. In addition to the cognitive dimension of learning, it emphasizes the affective/emotional domain as well. Essentially, individual need and interest are the keys to adult learning.

Constructivist Orientation

Constructivists view learning as a process of constructing meaning, and they value how people make sense of their experience. However, Steffe and Gale (1995, as cited in Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) point out that the view of personal constructivists and social constructivists differ in the following aspects: the nature of reality, the role of experience, what knowledge is of interest, and whether the process of meaning-making is primarily individual or social.

From a personal constructivist point of view, learning is an internal cognitive activity, which provides “...experiences that induce cognitive conflict and hence encourages learners to develop new knowledge schemes that are better adapted to experience[s]” (Driver, Asoko, Leach, Mortimer, & Scott, 1994, p. 6). That is to say, meaning is constructed by the individual through inner thinking, and the previous and

current knowledge structure and experiences of the individual are fundamental (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007).

Conversely, social constructivists argue that knowledge is:

...constructed when individuals engage socially in talk and activity about shared problems or tasks. Making meaning is thus a dialogic process involving persons-in-conversation, and learning is seen as the process by which individuals are introduced to a culture by more skilled members. (Driver, Asoko, Leach, Mortimer, & Scott, 1994, p. 7)

The two ways of thinking demonstrate that meaning-making is a complicated process, and it can be reached by either thinking critically by oneself or in conversation with others, which ultimately must be internalized by the self.

Susan Pass (2004) combines the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky in her book, *Parallel Paths to Constructivism: Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky*. Pass' combined pedagogy features the following aspects: focusing on the individual within the group, adopting inquiry-based instruction, using external (talking) and internal language (thinking to oneself) as a tool of learning, providing a rich learning environment, and accepting and learning from errors. This kind of pedagogy indicates that in order to ensure the best learning achievement, both personal and social aspects of constructivist learning should be equally addressed.

In the process of literacy coaching, the interactions between the coach and the teacher are aligned with humanist and social constructivist adult learning theories. The relationship between literacy coaching and the two theories is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The Relationship Between Literacy Coaching Process and Adult Learning Theories

Literacy Coaching Process		Adult Learning Theories	
Practices Before Coaching	Building a trusting relationship with teachers, and not being authoritarian and judgmental	Humanism	Emphasizing the affective/emotional domain, as well as fulfilling the needs of security, protection belonging, and love
	Learning about teachers' individual needs	Constructivism	Understanding the teachers' current and previous experiences, understandings, and schemas and determining what teachers want to learn
Practices During Coaching	Using good communication skills	Humanism	Emphasizing the affective/emotional domain
	Implementing effective coaching strategies	Constructivism	Constructing meaning individually or collaboratively
Outcomes After Coaching	Teacher growth	Humanism	Teachers' needs of esteem fulfilled, and coaches' needs of self-actualization fulfilled
		Constructivism	Implementing the newly constructed knowledge
	Student achievement	Humanism	Both teachers' and coaches' needs of self-actualization fulfilled
		Constructivism	Implementing the newly constructed knowledge

Background Information About Taiwan

Taiwan, also known as the Republic of China, is located across the Taiwan Strait

and off the southeastern coast of mainland China. Taiwan has a population of approximately 23 million people and an area of about 36,000 square kilometers (14,400 square miles). In recognition that education is the bedrock of national development, various education measures have been implemented over the last ten years in Taiwan, such as reforms to pre-school education, the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, the restructuring of secondary education, the enhancement of higher education, and the implementation of lifelong learning projects (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2010). The current nine years of compulsory education (elementary and junior high school) will be extended to twelve years (senior high or vocational education) in 2014 (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2011a). In order to provide the implications of this study for Taiwan, I will discuss the current Grade 1-9 Curriculum, professional development for teachers, Chinese literacy education, and English literacy education in Taiwan.

The Grade 1-9 Curriculum

In order to keep up with the 21st century and global trends in educational reform, as well as to foster national competitiveness and overall quality of life, in 2001 the Grade 1-9 Curriculum was implemented with the following characteristics (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, n.d.a):

Integrated curriculum. Instead of dividing knowledge by subject, the Grade 1-9 Curriculum encompasses seven major learning areas including: Language Arts (e.g., Mandarin Chinese, English, Taiwanese, Hakka, and Indigenous Languages), Health and Physical Education, Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and Integrative Activities.

School-based curriculum development. Under the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, each

school must have a Committee for School Curriculum Development in place, which includes representatives from school administrators, teachers for each grade and learning area, parents, and the community. Scholars and professionals may also be invited to join the committee for consultation, when necessary. Before the beginning of each semester, the Committee of School Curriculum Development has to develop a School Curriculum Plan by considering factors such as school conditions, features of the community, parental expectations, and student needs.

Teacher empowerment and professional development. Instead of using textbooks, teachers are encouraged to develop and share their own teaching materials. Moreover, it is strongly recommended that teachers attend workshops, enroll in continuing education programs, and conduct team teaching and action research.

Professional Development for Teachers in Taiwan

In Taiwan, there are several mechanisms in place to support teacher learning. First, as students in the four-year colleges or universities, pre-service teachers learn educational theories and practices and develop expertise in a certain area of teaching. Before they begin teaching, they have to fulfill a six-month teaching practicum and pass the teacher recruiting examinations, held by local education bureaus or schools. Next, after being employed by a school, the in-service teachers attend weekly half-day workshops in their schools as a means to improve their teaching practices. Additionally, the in-service teachers participate in other professional development activities such as pursuing graduate studies, attending conferences/workshops, and reading professional literature.

In addition to these professional development opportunities, teacher learning in

Taiwan is facilitated by a three-tier support system, which features the Central Advisory Team, Regional Instructional Consulting Team, and Mentor Teachers (see Figure 2).

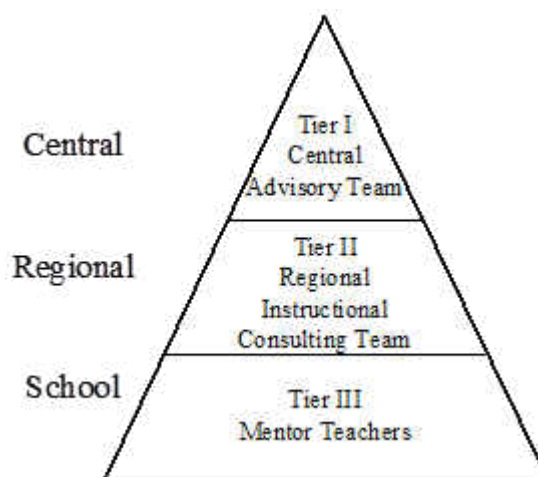


Figure 2. The three-tier teacher support system in Taiwan. Adapted from Chern & Hsu, 2009, p. 159.

The first tier, the Central Advisory Team, is directed by the Ministry of Education and consists of several experienced teachers, university professors, and representatives from the Ministry of Education. Their responsibilities include promoting educational policies, providing timely support for Tier II members, and learning about the challenges encountered by local governments when administering educational policies. The second tier, the Regional Instructional Consulting Team, is composed of master teachers, principals, university professors, and representative(s) from local governments. The team members are recruited by local education bureaus to facilitate professional development in the local schools. The responsibilities of the Tier II members include: demonstrating classroom/instructional techniques, advocating and implementing policies, and providing

a communication network between central and local governments (Chern & Hsu, 2009). The third tier, the Mentor Teachers, are those experienced teachers in individual schools who provide assistance, resources, and consultation to the new teachers, as well as to other teachers who need support (Chang, 2011).

Although it was not until 2007 that the three-tier support system was formally introduced, the Regional Instructional Consulting Team (Tier II) evolved from a similar model that can be traced back to 1958 (Change, 2011). Members in Tier II are trained in their first year (Stage 1 training courses, 39 hours) and second year (Stage 2 training courses, 36 hours). The training courses are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Training Courses for Regional Instructional Consulting Team Members in Taiwan

Topics	Hours Allocated	
	Stage 1	Stage 2
Implementation and Promotion of Educational Policies (e.g., information from the Ministry of Education and regional education bureaus, Grade 1-9 Curriculum, high quality teaching practices, teacher evaluation)	6	9
Curriculum and Instructional Leadership (e.g., how to organize professional development activities, like workshops and study groups; innovative teaching/learning projects)	3	6
Curriculum Development and Evaluation (e.g., design and develop school-based curriculum or teaching materials, evaluate courses/curriculum, hot topics)	9	6
Curriculum Innovation and Resources/Management/Application (e.g., new ideas on teaching, teacher evaluation, assessments, learner achievement analysis, use of technology)	9	6
Instructional Assistance: Theories and Practices (e.g., professional dialogue/idea sharing, teaching demonstrations/observations, teaching portfolios)	9	6
Others (e.g., panel discussions with Ministry of Education representatives/Central Advisory Team members to address hot topics, or topics chosen by regional mentors)	3	3
Total	39	36

Note. Adapted from Chern & Hsu, 2009, pp. 160-161.

Although the Tier II members are trained to provide support to teachers in local schools, the lack of manpower to provide enough assistance to all the teachers has been a concern. In addition, many school teachers have lost interest in participating in the professional development activities organized by the Tier II members because the professional development activities they have held are mostly lecture-oriented one-shot workshops

(Chang & Wu, 2011).

From 2006 to date, an increasing number of schools have participated in piloting the teacher appraisal scheme in Taiwan. Schools are encouraged to have teachers conduct a self-evaluation and be evaluated by the school evaluation committee according to criteria such as curriculum design and instruction, classroom management and consultation, research and professional development, and devotion and attitude. Schools that choose to participate in the teacher appraisal scheme can apply for funding from the Ministry of Education. For those teachers who do not pass the evaluation, the school evaluation committee suggests related professional development opportunities, or assigns a Mentor Teacher to provide assistance (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2011b). Since 2006, the roles of Mentor Teachers have evolved from solely mentoring new teachers to assisting others who are in need as well. To become a qualified Mentor Teacher who is expected to provide professional development in one's school, a teacher must meet the following qualifications and requirements (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2011c).

1. Have taught for at least 5 years.
2. Have been trained for 40 hours to become a certified evaluator.
3. Have a suitable temperament and the ability to mentor other teachers.
4. Have completed the training courses offered only for the Mentor Teachers.

The training courses offered to evaluators and Mentor Teachers are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Training Courses for Mentor Teachers in Taiwan

Course Titles	For Evaluators and Mentor Teachers			For Mentor Teachers only	
	Stage 1		Stage 2		Online & Face-to-Face starting from 2012
	Online	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face	Face-to-Face 2011	
A. Foundations of Teacher Professional Development and Evaluation	2				
B. Regulations for Teacher Professional Development and Evaluation	1.5				
C1. Teaching Portfolio: Compiling, Assessing, and Implementing (I)	2.5	3			
C2. Teaching Portfolio: Compiling, Assessing, and Implementing (II)			6		
D1. Observation and Conferring(I)	2	8			
D2. Observation and Conferring(II)			6		
D3. Observation and Conferring(III)				6	6
E1. Professional Development Plan(I)	2	1			
E2. Professional Development Plan(II)			3		
F1. Curriculum, Instruction, and Classroom Management (I)			3		
F2. Curriculum, Instruction, and Classroom Management (II)				9	6
G. Mentoring: Theories and Practices				12	9
H. Interpersonal Relationships and Communication for Mentor Teachers				6	3
I. Action Research				9	6
Total (hours)	10	12	18	42	30

Source. Translated and adapted from Ministry of Education, Taiwan, (2011d).

After completing the training and having actual mentoring experience, Mentor Teachers are certified by the local governments, and their licenses must be renewed every ten years.

Comparing the three-tier teacher support system in Taiwan with literacy coaching in the U. S. reveals that the teachers in Tier II are similar to the U.S. district-based coaches, and those in Tier III resemble the U.S. school-based coaches. By studying literacy coaching in the United States, it is hoped that this study can identify some effective professional development methods for Chinese and English literacy teachers in Taiwan.

Chinese Literacy Education

Previous studies about Chinese literacy education in Taiwan have shown that literacy teachers have been transmitters and evaluators of linguistic knowledge and skills (Chin & Wu, 2000, as cited in Chin & Chiu, 2003). In the elementary language arts classes, teachers usually spend most of the class time introducing new vocabulary and idioms, explaining the meaning of texts, teaching grammatical rules, and drilling sentence structures. This text-oriented instruction has limited many potential possibilities of literacy instruction. (Shen & Huang, 1998, as cited in Chin & Chiu, 2003). According to Yen (2010), students' lack of interest in reading and writing might be attributed to the overemphasis on memorizing Chinese characters and idioms in the elementary level, and the classical Chinese (the literary language used in ancient China and which is still used to a much lesser extent in formal writing today) in the secondary level.

Inspired by the reading initiatives in England (Build a Nation of Readers), the U.S. (Reading Excellence Act and Reading First), and Japan (Read for 20 Minutes a Day with Your Child, and the Children's Daily Morning Reading Program), the Ministry of

Education in Taiwan has initiated various reading programs to better equip citizens to compete in the knowledge economy era. Since 2001, those programs have been implemented in the K-9 levels by enriching school library resources, improving reading environments, training reading teachers, and subsidizing private charity organizations and local governments to sponsor related activities (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2006).

Reading as a distinct subject has not been included in the school educational system. With the pressure to perform well on high school and college entrance exams, many students and parents in Taiwan consider reading equal to studying textbooks. Therefore, reading for pleasure is not highly valued and is not widely practiced. In order to cultivate student interest and motivation in reading, the Ministry of Education plans to officially incorporate reading into the curriculum in the fall semester of 2012. To date, approximately NT\$870 million (nearly US\$30 million) have been allocated to improving the libraries in the elementary and junior high schools. Currently, teachers are recruited for training as “teacher librarians” and are given 10 release hours to organize the reading curriculum and activities in their schools. Reading materials will be developed by some of the trained teacher librarians and reading experts in Taiwan. Starting in July 2012, reading teacher training seminars will be held nationwide in order to cultivate “seed teachers” in reading. The teachers will learn theories and practices about reading instruction and return to their schools to promote reading (Li, 2012).

Although for years the Taiwanese government has allocated funds for promoting reading, student interest in reading and student reading performance on international reading assessments have not been satisfactory. For instance, a recent study conducted by a local government in Taiwan revealed that the fourth graders in Hsinchu City usually

pursue the following leisure activities during the weekends (from most frequent to least frequent): exercising, watching TV, helping with household chores, doing homework, and reading for pleasure. Furthermore, eighth graders usually watch TV, surf on the internet, exercise, do homework, and read for pleasure on the weekends (Chen & Hung, 2012). A national survey study on Taiwanese students' self-learning ability showed that students in grades 7-9 in Taiwan lack both the ability to read as well as an interest in reading. Specifically, close to one fourth of the student respondents reported that it was difficult for them to read books that contained only text. Over one fourth of the students had never checked out books or searched references by themselves in a library, and only 40% of the students had the habit of reading extensively. When asked if they would read for pleasure when they were no longer students, only 33% of the students responded positively. Additionally, more than 70% of the teacher respondents indicated that their students did not have the ability to comprehend and summarize texts. Over 80% of the teachers perceived that their students lacked writing skills, and 72% of them did not think that their students knew how to take notes (Huang & Bai, 2008). In terms of Taiwanese student performance on international assessments, the results of the last two PISA administrations and the last PIRLS administration are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6

Taiwanese Student Performance on PISA

Category	Ranking	
	2006 ^a	2009 ^b
Math	1	5
Science	4	12
Reading	16	23

Note. Translated and adapted from Ministry of Education, Taiwan (n.d.b).

^a Taiwan's first time participation; from 57 participating jurisdictions; focus on science literacy.

^b Taiwan's second time participation; from 65 participating jurisdictions; focus on reading literacy.

Table 7

Taiwanese Student Performance on PIRLS

Category	Ranking
	2006 ^a
Combined Reading Literacy Scale	22

Note. Translated and adapted from Ministry of Education, Taiwan (n.d.b).

^a Taiwan's first time participation; from 45 participating jurisdictions.

Although the reading performance of Taiwanese students was above the global average, it was behind many other Asian countries such as China (including Hong Kong), Korea, and Singapore (Ku, 2010). The drop in the PISA rankings from 16th in 2006 to 23rd in 2009 has concerned many Taiwanese.

Incorporating reading into the curriculum is only the first step in cultivating student interest and improving reading achievement. More ongoing teacher support must be provided to address the challenges that will evolve while incorporating reading into the curriculum. In addition to the one-shot teacher training seminars or workshops, literacy coaching, which is an on-site, continuous professional development method, is an ideal way to scaffold teaching and learning in the long term.

English Literacy Education

For Taiwan, the importance of English lies in the fact that it has become a global language; it is an essential tool for succeeding in the competitive global village.

According to Graddol (2006), “English ... has become a new baseline: without English you are not even in the race” (Graddol, 2006, p. 122). In Taiwan, English is the most popular and important foreign language due to the fact that it affects success in study, employment, and promotion. English used to be taught as a foreign language in secondary schools (grades 7-12) and above. In 2001, it was officially required in the elementary curriculum for grades 5-6, and in 2005, in grades 3 and above. However, many elementary schools, especially the ones with more resources, offer English instruction at all grade levels.

Adopting the Communicative Approach to English instruction is specified in the Grade 1-9 Curriculum. Nunan (1991a) posits the characteristics of the Communicative Approach, which include:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
4. An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom. (p. 279)

Although teachers are expected to adopt the Communicative Approach to teach English, many teachers still use the Grammar Translation Method or Audiolinguistic Method

(Wang, 2010).

In a recent report regarding Taiwanese students' English performance on the Cambridge English exams, the passing rate was found to be slightly higher than the global average at the elementary level, yet lower than Asian countries such as Malaysia, China, Philippines, Indonesia, and Hong Kong. Furthermore, the junior high school student pass rate was lower than the global average, and the senior high school pass rate was lower than the Asian average (You, 2012). To improve the current English teaching practices and English proficiency, literacy coaching seems to be an effective way to transform teaching and learning in Taiwanese schools.

Summary

Research on professional development for teachers has shed some light on the characteristics of effective professional development, which comprises activities that are intensive, ongoing, connected to practice, focused on student learning, aligned with school improvement priorities and goals, and that address the teaching of specific curriculum content and build strong working relationships among teachers. Literacy coaching, which features the aforementioned characteristics and aligns with humanist and constructivist adult learning theories, has become one of the most popular professional development approaches in the United States. Current literature pertaining to literacy coaching primarily addresses the areas of: (a) roles, qualifications, and responsibilities of literacy coaches; (b) coaching activities, coaching models, and effective coaching strategies; (c) preparation and support of literacy coaches; and (d) effectiveness of literacy coaching. Although there has been a widespread call for the investigation of literacy coaching effectiveness, research findings in this area are inconclusive. With the

proliferation of literacy coaching, more research is also needed to explore literacy coaches' lived experiences, such as the difficulties and challenges they have encountered. In Taiwan, both Chinese and English literacy education need improvement. Literacy coaching seems to be a promising way to achieve that aim.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

In this chapter, I begin by providing a rationale for conducting a mixed methods study, and then go on to explain the research design. Next, I detail the procedures of collecting, analyzing and combining the qualitative and quantitative data.

Rationale for Conducting a Mixed Methods Study

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies have their own characteristics, and serve different purposes. It is widely agreed that qualitative research can provide a deeper understanding of people's lived experiences, social interactions, and perspectives (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). Quantitative research allows researchers to collect and analyze a large amount of data in an efficient manner. In addition, quantitative researchers can use scores to measure distinct attributes of individuals, compare groups, or relate factors concerning individuals or groups in experiments, correlational studies, and surveys (Creswell, 2012). In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have conducted mixed methods studies because mixed methods studies not only provide more evidence to support either quantitative or qualitative research, but also answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). Mixed methods research, as defined by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007), is:

The type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines

elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p. 123)

Creswell and Plano Clark (2010) propose six major mixed methods research designs: the convergent parallel design, the explanatory sequential design, the exploratory sequential design, the embedded design, the transformative design, and the multiphase design. They have urged mixed methods researchers to match the design to the research problem, purpose, and questions. In order to gain a broad and deep understanding of literacy coaching in the United States, this study adopted one of the mixed methods research designs—the embedded design.

The Embedded Design

In this study, the research design was undergirded by the following questions:

1. What is the nature of literacy coaching? Why and how is literacy coaching different from previous professional development methods? Do teachers perceive literacy coaching to be a better method of professional development than past methods? If so, why?
2. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers and literacy coaches regarding the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement?

The embedded design was adopted as the framework for this study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2010), the embedded design is “a mixed methods approach where the researcher combines the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data within a traditional quantitative research design or qualitative research design” (p. 90). In this study, a convergent parallel mixed methods research design² (the

² “The convergent parallel design (also referred to as the convergent design) occurs when the researcher

supplemental strand) was embedded in a traditional qualitative research design (the main strand). Specifically, in the main strand, three literacy coaches were interviewed and observed, and in the supplemental strand, 108 classroom teachers were invited to complete an online survey consisting of multiple-choice (quantitative) and open-ended (qualitative) questions. Using Creswell and Plano Clark’s mixed methods notation system, the overall design of the study can be described as: QUAL (+ quan + qual). A flow chart depicting the overall research design, including the procedures and products in each strand, is shown in Figure 3.

An Embedded Mixed Methods Study Design

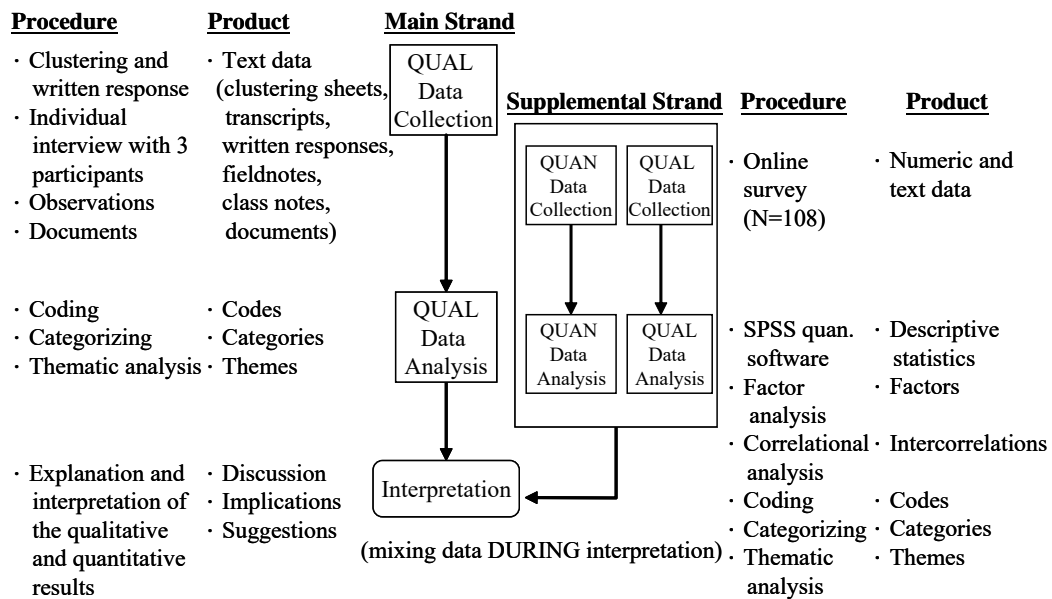


Figure 3. Flow chart of the research design.

uses concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process, prioritizes the methods equally, and keeps the strands independent during analysis and then mixes the results during the overall interpretation” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010, pp. 70-71).

As suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2010), researchers conducting mixed methods studies using the embedded design should explain how the data sets in the main strand and supplemental strand are mixed. In the following discussion, I will first describe the participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures in each strand, and then illustrate how the data from the two strands are mixed.

The Main Strand—A Qualitative Research Design

Three literacy coaches were invited to participate in the main strand of the study. What follows are the background information of the participants, settings, data collection, and data analysis procedures in this strand.

Participants

Three literacy coaches—Judy, Olivia, and Jill—were invited to participate in this study through purposive sampling. In order to reflect the various contexts of literacy coaching, these coaches were invited from schools/districts with different philosophies regarding literacy instruction. Judy and Olivia are both school-based coaches. Judy's school, a Reading First school, adopted a commercial reading program, and teachers were strictly required to teach according to the fully-scripted teachers' manuals. Conversely, in Olivia's school, teachers were trained to develop their own curriculum based on the standards. Moreover, they were encouraged to teach by using as much authentic literature as they could. Jill is a district-based instructional coach, whose district also adopted a commercial reading program, but teachers had autonomy in determining what to teach. Table 8 displays the background information of the three coaches.

Table 8

Background Information of the Three Coaches

Name	Affiliation	Education	Experience in Years
Judy	Golden Sunshine Elementary	Bachelor's: Elementary Ed. Master's: Special Ed. Doctoral: Teacher Ed. (pending)	Kindergarten: 4 Title I teacher: 6 Reading coach: 7 Co-chair: School Improvement Team Reading consultant: Program Specific State Expert of Macmillan/ McGraw-Hill reading program
Olivia	Oak Hill Elementary	Bachelor's: Elementary Ed. Master's: Reading Ed. (pending)	Kindergarten: 7 First grade: 1 Third grade: 7 Title I teacher: 1 Reading specialist: 1 Literacy coach: 6
Jill	P.S.D. #35	Bachelor's: Elementary Ed. Master's: Special Ed.	Paraprofessional: 2 Fourth grade: 9 Building resource coordinator: 5 Principal: 1 Instructional coach: 3 Co-chair: Literacy Committee Chair: Social Studies Committee

Judy. Judy is one of the two reading coaches in the Reading First Program in Golden Sunshine Elementary School, which is located on a Native American Indian reservation of about 6,400 people in a Midwestern state. Judy's school became a Reading First school in 2004, and since then, she has been a coach in her school. In the same year, she was awarded "Golden Apple Teacher of the Year" by a local television station in recognition of her unique integration of literature instruction into the kindergarten curriculum. Due to the successful outcomes resulting from the coaching model, Judy's school has hired one math coach and two writing coaches to help the teachers improve their instruction.

Olivia. Olivia is a literacy coach in Oak Hill Elementary School, which is located in a Midwestern town of 4,000 people. Formerly, there were three literacy coaches in Olivia's school, but in 2009 two coaches quit due to professional burnout. Adopting a balanced language and literacy framework, teachers in Oak Hill Elementary have to conduct a daily reading workshop (60-90 minutes), a writing workshop (45-60 minutes), as well as language and word study (30-60 minutes) using various teacher-selected materials.

Jill. Jill was one of the three instructional coaches in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development in Public School District Number 35 (P. S. D. #35), which is located in a Midwestern town of about 50,000 people. Jill's department was created in 2008 because many schools in this district did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). During this study, Jill's coaching tasks were focused on piloting and developing a writing curriculum for her district in Weldon Elementary School and Winner Elementary School, in addition to collecting and interpreting the assessment data for the whole district.

Table 9 shows the background information of the aforementioned district and schools.

Table 9

Background Information of District and Schools

Participants	Affiliation	Demographics of the Schools	Made AYP in Reading	
			2010	2011
Judy	Golden Sunshine Elementary	773 students, mostly Native Americans 38 classes 100% free/reduced lunch	No	No
Olivia	Oak Hill Elementary	841 students, mostly Caucasians 35 classes 42% free/reduced lunch	Yes	Yes
Jill	P.S.D. #35	12 elementary schools 4 middle schools 3 high schools 7200 students; 700 teachers	Yes	No
	Weldon Elementary	166 students, mostly Caucasians 9 classes 67% free/reduced lunch	Yes	Yes
	Winner Elementary	234 students, mostly Caucasians 10 classes 44% free/reduced lunch	Yes	No

Note. Adapted from Public School Review (n.d.), Minnesota Department of Education (n.d.), and North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (n.d.).

Data Collection

In this strand, I used several ways to collect the qualitative data, including clustering sessions, interviews, written responses, observations, class notes, and documents.

Clustering sessions. A clustering session was conducted with the three coaches individually. Before I conducted the clustering sessions, I explained the purpose of my study and how they would be involved, as described in the consent form. After they signed the consent forms, they were asked to generate words, phrases, or images that

came to mind around the phrase, “Classroom teachers, student literacy achievement, and me” (Appendix A). I learned how to use clustering as a way to elicit images and feelings from Karpiak’s (2006) study about social workers at midlife. I consider clustering to be a practical basis and tool for facilitating participants’ expression of their beliefs and concerns. The three coaches spent about 3-10 minutes clustering.

Interviews. The number of interviews with each participant depended on the saturation of the collected data. I conducted three interviews with Judy, one with Olivia, and three with Jill. After the clustering, the coaches were asked to explain their clustering to me. I asked follow-up questions based on their explanations; each session took about 15 minutes. In order to have a thorough understanding of their work, I conducted two following interviews each, ranging from 30 to 50 minutes, with Judy and Jill. Topics discussed with Judy included the Reading First program in her school, how coaching responsibilities were divided between her and her colleague, the coach training she had received, and the professional development courses/workshops she had offered. In the two interviews with Jill, we discussed how the coaching responsibilities were divided among her two colleagues and her, her work at Weldon Elementary and Winner Elementary, and her other responsibilities as a district-based coach. I did not conduct any further interviews with Olivia because of the information I gathered during the following events. First, she was invited to one of my graduate classes to give a 50-minute introduction about her job. The topics addressed in that talk included the literacy program in her school, the coach training and professional development she had had, her responsibilities as a coach, the exciting moments and frustrations of being a coach, and her suggestions to those who want to become literacy coaches. Second, Olivia and I took

two graduate classes together, one on writing instruction and one on literacy coaching. As Olivia was very experienced and quite verbal, she always shared her thoughts and experiences with the class. Third, in addition to the class discussion, Olivia and I had many informal conversations before and after classes.

Written responses. Before conducting the observations, the three coaches were asked to fill out a personal information sheet (see Appendix B) and answer 18 questions in written format. I adopted this method because I wanted the coaches to take time and think about their philosophies about literacy instruction and coaching, their experiences as coaches, their advice to new coaches and those who wanted to become coaches, the challenges they encountered, and the support they had as coaches (see Appendix C). They were asked to email their responses to me after they completed them. I carefully studied their responses before I shadowed them at work.

Observations. I conducted two whole-day observations with Judy and Olivia, and thirty 60-90-minute sessions with Jill. Judy's school was on a Native American Indian Reservation, which enforced strict regulations for school visitors, so I was only allowed to shadow her for two days. During the two-day visit, I shadowed Judy while she conducted walk-throughs, screened students to participate in a local radio program by having them read stories aloud, examined teachers' lessons plans, and analyzed student assessment data. In addition, Judy arranged for me to observe in a regular kindergarten class and one remedial reading class. My observations of Olivia took place one day in the spring semester of 2011, when she conducted a new teacher training workshop, and one day in the fall semester of 2011, when I shadowed her while she conducted the following activities: facilitating a kindergarten grade-level meeting, meeting with the principal and

literacy director, modeling a guided reading lesson, conferring with teachers, coaching-on-the-fly, assessing students' reading levels, and facilitating the literacy team meeting. My observations of Jill's work as a district-based coach were different than my observations of Judy and Olivia. Since most of Jill's time is spent in her office in the district education building, I shadowed her only when she coached in Weldon and Winner Elementary Schools rather than shadowing her for two full days. I also observed her facilitating district professional development sessions. The observations with Jill started in April 2011 and ended at the end of December 2011.

When I visited with Judy, Olivia, and Jill, I always carried a notebook, an audio recorder, and a camera. I recorded all interviews and observations, and took detailed notes. I took pictures of their working environments and of some documents if they did not have an extra copy for me. When I got home, I typed the notes into my computer and wrote memos reflecting on what I had seen, read, and heard.

Class notes. As mentioned previously, Olivia was invited to one of my graduate classes to give a 50-minute talk on literacy coaching in the fall semester of 2010. She and I also took two graduate classes together in the spring and fall semesters of 2011, one of which was focused on literacy coaching. In the fall semester of 2011, Jill and her colleagues were also invited to my graduate class, which focused on literacy coaching to share what they had done in the district. I took notes in those classes, especially when they stated what they did and how they felt about their jobs.

Documents. Before I observed Judy, Olivia, and Jill, I checked the background information about the schools and districts involved in the study. When I observed the three coaches, I collected the handouts they gave to teachers and students. I also read

their training binders to learn what kind of training they had received to become a coach.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the clustering sessions and interviews, I analyzed the interview transcripts, observation fieldnotes, and documents through the following steps: First, I explored the data by reading them two to three times to obtain “a general sense of the data” (Creswell, 2012, p. 243). Next, I divided the texts into segments of information and labeled them with codes. After that, I reduced the codes by grouping similar codes together. Finally, I grouped similar codes into categories and merged similar categories into themes.

The Supplemental Strand—A Convergent Parallel Research Design

In the supplemental strand, an online survey was developed to collect both quantitative data and qualitative data regarding classroom teachers’ perceptions of literacy coaching. What follows are the procedures for data collection and data analysis in this strand.

Developing and Piloting the Online Survey

In order to develop a valid, reliable survey, a pilot study was conducted before the formal investigation. In the pilot study, a survey titled “Teachers’ Perceptions of Literacy Coaching” was developed based on the current literature about literacy coaching and professional development. The first draft of the survey, which was presented to seven faculty members with expertise in various areas, included literacy education, teacher education, language education, test and measurement, quantitative research, qualitative research, and mixed methods research. The survey was revised according to their suggestions and feedback, and was then uploaded to SurveyMonkey, an online survey

software and questionnaire tool. Two classroom teachers, who were then working with a literacy coach, were invited to pre-test the revised survey online. They both had positive feedback about the survey, so this version was used for the pilot study.

The online survey for the pilot study consisted of 45 items, including 9 demographic questions, 29 six-point Likert-scale-type questions, and 7 open-ended questions (see Appendix D). The 29 Likert-scale-type questions (1=*strongly disagree*, 2=*disagree*, 3=*slightly disagree*, 4=*slightly agree*, 5=*agree*, and 6=*strongly agree*) were divided into four subscales: Experience, Teacher Change, Student Growth, and Effectiveness, with 10, 7, 5, and 7 questions respectively. Thirty-four classroom teachers who were working with or had previously worked with a literacy coach were recruited through convenient sampling to take part in the pilot study in March 2011. Two of the teachers completed only the demographic information, so their responses were removed from the pool for further analysis. Thirty-two responses were considered valid and were further analyzed.

The quantitative data analysis was carried out with the use of Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 19. First, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to explore the relationship among the four constructs. The results indicated that 12 questions should be removed from the survey, and constructs II (Teacher Change) and III (Student Growth) should be combined into one. The survey was revised accordingly, and the combined construct was named Literacy Coaching Outcomes. Cronbach's alpha of the three new constructs—Literacy Coaches' Positive Characteristics, Literacy Coaching Outcomes, and Literacy Coaching Effectiveness—were .92, .95, and .94 respectively.

In analyzing the qualitative open-ended questions, I found that many teachers chose to skip them. In order to make this part more teacher-friendly, questions 2, 6, and 7 were removed, and questions 1, 3, 4, and 5 were retained for the formal investigation.

At the end of the survey, I asked the teachers to provide some feedback regarding the overall survey design. Some of them indicated the need to represent a neutral voice. Hence, the six-point Likert-scale-type questions were changed into five-point Likert-scale questions.

Formal Investigation

The finalized online survey, entitled “Classroom Teachers’ Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Effectiveness” (see Appendix E), was administered via SurveyMonkey in April and May, 2011.

Instrument. The final online survey consisted of 7 demographic questions, 18 five-point Likert-scale questions (1=*strongly disagree*, 2=*disagree*, 3=*neutral*, 4=*agree*, and 5=*strongly agree*) and 4 open-ended questions. The Likert-scale questions aimed to investigate classroom teacher perceptions of their literacy coaches’ characteristics, literacy coaching outcomes, and literacy coaching effectiveness. The open-ended questions consisted of: (a) Please describe the characteristics of the best professional development experience you have had; (b) Do you think literacy coaching is an effective model of professional development? Why or why not? (c) What are your most important professional development needs in literacy instruction? and (d) What would you like your literacy coach to do that he/she is not doing now?

Survey respondents. In addition to surveying teachers at schools I know offered literacy coaching, I used “literacy coaching” as key words to search online for schools

and districts that employed literacy coaches. If the classroom teachers' email addresses were available online, I emailed the invitation with the survey link directly to them. If only the principals' email addresses were available, I emailed the invitation with the survey link to the principals, and asked them to forward the link to the classroom teachers in their schools. In some cases, I only had the literacy coaches' email addresses, so I did the same thing as I did with the principals.

At the close of the online survey, 116 teachers had taken it. Eight out of the 116 responses, however, were considered invalid for reasons such as incomplete answers or not being a classroom teacher. All the participants who completed the survey were entered to win a 100-dollar gift card to a Target store as an incentive.

Data analysis. The quantitative data analysis was carried out with SPSS, version 19. In addition to the descriptive statistics, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to explore the relationships among the 18 questions. The results confirmed the grouping of the questions. Cronbach's alpha of the constructs (i.e., Literacy Coaches' Positive Characteristics, Literacy Coaching Outcomes, and Literacy Coaching Effectiveness) were .90, .92, and .88 respectively. The data was then further analyzed by using Pearson Correlation.

Constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was implemented to analyze the qualitative data in the survey. I first read the responses to each question several times, and then provided code(s) for each statement. Next, I categorized the codes by putting similar codes into one category. Finally, the top categories with the most codes were selected as the representative answers to each question. In addition, negative responses or perceptions (i.e., why the classroom teachers think literacy coaching is not effective)

were identified, and they were added to the list of intervening factors in the literacy coaching process (for detailed information see Chapter IV).

Ethical Issues

I took several steps to address ethical issues. I began by obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and then personally contacted the coaches to minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence. For instance, I obtained Olivia's email address from a professor, who happened to be her academic advisor. Second, to protect confidentiality, I used pseudonyms to identify the coaches and their affiliations, not only in the clustering and interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and memos, but in all data and reports. Third, I stored the consent forms securely in a locked cabinet, and there was no way to link consent forms to any collected data. Finally, although I took classes with two of the coaches, I restricted my observations to public behavior only, and did not intrude on spaces or topics they wanted restricted. I also removed any identifying information in all data and reports.

Bias and Validity

Many aspects of my life contributed to potential researcher bias in this study. One example of a potential bias is that in the last three and a half years, I have taken several classes about reading and writing instruction and observed how my daughter has grown from one who did not know how to converse in English to one whose reading is above grade-level. Based on these experiences, I have developed a strong belief about best practices in literacy teaching and learning. These experiences can contribute to bias in my study, however, Maxwell (2005) posits, "Separating your research from other parts of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks" (p.

38). In order not to cut myself off from the benefits Maxwell describes, I chose not to try to separate my research from my life, but to carefully monitor my biases and ensure methodological rigor by implementing numerous strategies. First of all, I studied the literature about professional development and literacy coaching before, during, and after data collection. Second, I had prolonged interactions with the three coaches. Third, I triangulated the findings by drawing evidence from different sources such as interviews, observations, and survey results. The other ways I held myself accountable included keeping fieldnotes, writing memos, transcribing the interviews verbatim, confirming my interpretations with the participants in person or through email correspondences (member checking), and building an audit trail to record how the raw data went through the process of analysis, reduction, and synthesis. Finally, I did a peer debriefing by presenting this study to three graduate students in my department, and asking for their comments and suggestions.

Merging the Data from the Two Strands

After analyzing the data separately in the main strand and the supplemental strand, I combined the data during interpretation. For instance, when answering the research question I drew data not only from the interviews and observations, but also from the classroom teachers' inputs solicited from the survey.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the rationale for conducting a mixed methods study and explained the embedded mixed methods research design, which includes a main strand and a supplemental strand. A flow chart was provided illustrating the overall research design, as well as the procedures and products of each strand. In the main strand,

a qualitative research design, I interviewed and observed three literacy coaches. In the supplemental strand, a convergent parallel design, I investigated classroom teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching effectiveness through an online survey. The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. One hundred and eight classroom teachers' responses were analyzed. At the end of the chapter, I explained how the data in the two strands were combined.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. I begin with a brief review of the purpose of the study and research questions, and then discuss the findings of the main strand and the supplemental strand. Finally, I combine the data from the two strands and answer the first two research questions.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine the phenomenon of literacy coaching in the United States and then explore implications for Taiwan. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of literacy coaching? Why and how is literacy coaching different from previous professional development methods? Do teachers perceive literacy coaching to be a better method of professional development than past methods? If so, why?
2. What are the perceptions of classroom teachers and literacy coaches regarding the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement?

An embedded mixed methods research design, which included a main strand and a supplemental strand, was employed to explore the research questions.

Results of the Main Strand—A Qualitative Design

In order to gain a deeper understanding of literacy coaching in the United States, two school-based coaches (Judy and Olivia) and one district-based coach (Jill) were invited to participate in this strand. Data were collected through their written responses to

18 questions, regarding such things as their philosophies of literacy instruction and literacy coaching, their coaching experiences, their perceptions of teacher learning, their advice for new coaches, and the support they received from their school or district (see Appendix C). Additionally, data were also collected from clustering sheets, interviews, observations, class notes, and related documents. Before presenting the themes that have emerged from the data, I will describe a school-based coach's day to provide the reader with a general idea about what a coach's day might be like.

A Coach's Day in School

Due to the complex nature of literacy coaching, it is nearly impossible to provide a description that represents a typical day for a literacy coach. However, since some coaching activities are conducted by most of the school-based coaches, the following description, which includes the coaching activities conducted by Olivia while I shadowed her on October 5th, 2011, provides a general picture of a coach's day in school.

7:30-7:45 Preparation for the grade-level meeting. In preparing for the meeting, Olivia made sure there were enough chairs, handouts, food, and drinks for every teacher.

7:45-8:45 Kindergarten literacy learning meeting. Olivia facilitated this grade-level meeting attended by six kindergarten teachers. They started by celebrating the fact that the school had made AYP, and continued with sharing ideas for using literacy centers, such as center management, activities, and routines. Some teachers mentioned they needed adult helpers when teaching students in groups.

9:00-9:30 Meeting with curriculum director and principal. Olivia met with the curriculum director and the principal to discuss the schedule and details for the upcoming

in-service day. She also summarized the meeting she had just had with the kindergarten teachers and addressed their shortage of staffing during center time.

9:40-10:00 Modeling guided reading. Olivia modeled for a first grade teacher how to conduct a guided reading session, using a group of four high-performing students as her model group. She used the picture book, *City Dog, Country Frog*, to teach students how to infer. When teaching, Olivia used language that was understandable for the students (e.g., “think about your thinking” and “figure out what was not written in the text”).

10:00-11:00 Unscheduled time. Olivia worked at her computer in her office preparing materials for the literacy team meeting in the afternoon.

11:00-11:25 Post conference. Olivia met with the first grade teacher to discuss the guided reading session she had just modeled. After answering the teacher’s questions, she and the teacher set a new goal to pursue together, and scheduled their next meeting.

11:25-12:00 Lunch. Olivia took a lunch break in her office.

12:00-12:30 Post conference. Olivia conducted another post conference with a third grade teacher. She started with a discussion of the lesson she had previously modeled for the teacher and then addressed the teacher’s questions. At the end, Olivia and the teacher set a new goal and scheduled the next meeting.

12:30-12:45 Coaching on-the-fly. While we were in the hallway, a third grade teacher excitedly asked Olivia to come to her classroom. The teacher showed her the “Vocabulary Basket” and “Word Wall” she had created for her students so that they could have ownership of words. Olivia acknowledged the teacher’s good work and shared her own experiences of vocabulary instruction with the teacher.

12:45-1:00 Unscheduled time. Olivia prepared for the benchmarking session at 1:00.

1:00-2:10 Benchmarking. Olivia helped a classroom teacher assess three students' reading levels.

2:10-2:35 Ongoing conference. Olivia held ongoing conferences with some new teachers who were eager to learn more. On that day, she met with a second grade teacher and discussed guided reading, differentiated instruction, and how to use writing notebooks. Before ending the meeting, Olivia set a time to model for the teacher how to determine advanced students' comprehension needs.

2:35-3:00 Unscheduled time. Olivia prepared the materials she was going to use in the literacy team meeting. Before the meeting, she put some refreshments on the table and made sure there were enough chairs for the team members.

3:00-4:00 Literacy team meeting. Olivia met with the literacy team which consisted of the principal and representatives from each grade level, Title I education, and special education. The principal had another engagement that day so he did not participate in the meeting. During the one-hour meeting, they discussed how they should collaborate on the upcoming in-service day.

4:00-4:30 Informal conversations. After the literacy team meeting, a teacher came to discuss some issues with Olivia. After that, Olivia and I spent 15 minutes discussing my observation.

4:30-on Olivia continued to work after I concluded my observation and left the school.

Themes of the Main Strand

Theme 1: Literacy coaching is a demanding job because literacy coaches have to play multiple, yet undefined roles. All the coaches in this study had to play multiple, yet undefined roles. For instance, Olivia used 18 terms to describe her roles on her clustering sheet: data collector, trainer, teacher, researcher, coach, resource finder, bookroom manager, facilitator, curriculum writer, leader, motivator, inspirer, cheerleader, sounding board, presenter, friend, listener, and coordinator. In fact, she played even more roles than she listed. At least four more roles could be added to her list, based on my observations: mediator, mentor, modeler, and collaborator. For example, when I visited Olivia the first time, she provided a one-day literacy training session for nine new K-4 teachers at her school, but her work that day went beyond just being a trainer. During one session, the five young, inexperienced kindergarten teachers confessed they had a toxic relationship with the three other kindergarten teachers who were very experienced. Olivia listened attentively and promised them she would find a way to work this out. During the break, two of them told me how grateful they were to have Olivia as their mentor. They said they would not survive as first-year teachers without her.

The second coach I worked with was Judy. When asked “What do you do as a literacy coach?” Judy wrote:

Maintain reading materials, organize reading groups, provide training to teachers, paras, etc., attend special education meetings, supervise four intervention teachers, do daily walk-throughs in classrooms to observe reading instruction, model for teachers, maintain reading related data, and on occasion I end up subbing.

The roles Judy played were more than those she listed as well. In the interview, Judy stated “Sometimes when they [the teachers] know she [the other reading coach] and I are both on travel, we know that test scores for that week are going to be lower for their weekly tests... One teacher even tells her students that we’re the reading cops...” In addition to being the “reading cop,” Judy was a mentor as well. For her, mentoring is “just very intensive coaching...and coaching outside of reading as well.” When mentoring teachers, she covered everything from record keeping, classroom management, and mock parent-teacher conferences to instructional strategies that teachers could use in all content areas. During the observation, I found that Judy also played the role of ambassador when she led a group of Head Start students on a tour of her school. She even served lunch on the second day of my visit because serving lunch was a job all administrators took turns doing.

The third coach I worked with, Jill, was a district-based coach. Her roles as a coach were different from Judy’s and Olivia’s. Jill wrote, “My main focus for coaching is data interpretation and helping teachers determine the instructional needs of their students based on the results of different assessments.” During my 30 observations with her in two schools and in district professional development sessions, I could see that the roles she played included those of teacher, learner, modeler, collaborator, resource finder, curriculum developer, listener, organizer, facilitator, and mentor.

Although all three coaches in this study had to play multiple roles, none of them had formal, written job descriptions. Their roles tended to evolve as they were either assigned new responsibilities or as they saw a need for a new project. After taking the job as a district-based literacy coach, Jill started by facilitating book study groups for the

English teachers in a middle school, and then she was put in charge of piloting an elementary-level writing curriculum for the district. Based on her collaboration with one classroom teacher, Nicole, while piloting the writing curriculum, Jill set a new goal for herself and Nicole: to remodel Nicole's room into an exemplary literacy classroom in the next academic year.

Theme 2: Literacy coaches need professional development. In order to play so many different roles, all the coaches in this study actively participated in various types of professional development in order to improve their coaching and leadership skills. More importantly, they all loved to share what they learned with the teachers they were working with. For instance, when asked “What kind of professional development activities do you participate in as a learner?” Judy wrote, “Reading on my own, advancement in [a] higher education degree (Ph.D.), and [...] school district professional development activities.” In describing how the school or district supported her work, she wrote, “The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), through Reading First, has had numerous trainings utilizing the train-the-trainer model. (3-4 trainings per year since 2004)....” Judy was not only a learner, but she loved to share what she learned with the teachers in her school. For instance, when she and I took a graduate class together in the summer of 2010, whenever there were good literacy practices mentioned in the articles or class discussion, she would jot them down on sticky notes, and then put them in her things-to-do file. One time she told me excitedly (we usually sat next to each other), “I will share those with my teachers!”

Olivia also participated in many professional activities as a learner. She wrote, “I go to a university twice a year for a 3-day professional development. Every other year, I

go to another university...I am also an avid reader who subscribes to several literacy publications and online sites and blogs to be up to date.” In the graduate class we took together in the fall semester of 2011, she shared with the class what she had just learned at a three-day professional development, and how she appreciated the chance for her “soul to be refilled.” Like Judy, Olivia also loved to share what she learned with the teachers in her school. For instance, for her final project for the aforementioned class, she conducted a study on how to improve her coaching by cultivating good listening skills because she had been troubled by her talking most of the time when conferring with teachers. When she realized how the listening skills might benefit the teachers in her school, she decided to conduct a professional development on “real listening” to help the teachers and students in her school to listen in a “true, empathetic, and present way.”

Like Judy and Olivia, Jill also participated in many professional development activities. She attended national conferences, trainings for coaches, various types of workshops, book studies, and collaborative meetings with colleagues. In addition to learning, Jill loved to share what she learned. For instance, while she modeled how to lead the writing workshop in a fourth grade classroom, she showed the classroom teacher (Nicole) how to use different transitioning strategies to get students’ attention when there was a need to change tasks during the writing workshop. She told Nicole that she had just learned the strategies at a conference on literacy education earlier that week.

The aforementioned examples demonstrate that the three coaches participated in many professional development activities, including reading professional publications, advancing their degrees in higher education, and attending national conferences, trainings for coaches, various types of workshops, book studies, and collaborative meetings with

colleagues. The finding extends Blamey, Meyer, and Walpole's (2008) finding that coaches seek opportunities to learn through "traditional educational settings, national and state conferences, and state- and district-level professional development" (p. 323). Additionally, it is important to note that not only were the three coaches seeking opportunities to learn, they were also eager to share what they had learned with the teachers they were working with. In their written responses, the three coaches, in their own words, all mentioned that seeing teachers acquire new skills was rewarding to them. As coaching is such a demanding job, participating in ongoing professional development to learn the different aspects of effective coaching is "the food for their souls," as Olivia stated. With that in mind, it is important to support literacy coaches in participating in ongoing professional development activities. By becoming learners themselves, not only can coaches become better at meeting the demanding job requirements, but as literacy leaders in schools or districts, they are also set good examples for the staff and students of what lifelong learning is all about.

Theme 3: Literacy coaches work in different contexts with different philosophies of literacy instruction. Judy, for example, worked at a Reading First school on a Native American reservation, while Olivia worked at a public school that adopted a balanced language and literacy framework, and Jill worked in a district administrative office. The contexts of their work featured different philosophies of literacy instruction.

Before Judy's school became a Reading First school in 2004, the teachers taught reading in their own ways. After 2004, the school not only adopted a core reading curriculum, but teachers were also required to teach according to the scripted teachers'

manuals. As a reading coach, one of Judy's responsibilities was to ensure the teachers' fidelity to their reading program by conducting three- to ten-minute walk-throughs during the 90-minute reading block every day.

In Judy's school, there were two reading coaches, two writing coaches, and one math coach employed at the time of the study. Judy was responsible for most of the reading coach duties for kindergarten, 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade, and the other reading coach was in charge of grades 1 and 2. "It [coaching all the grades] would be overwhelming for one person," said Judy. In addition, Judy provided most of the professional development sessions to train the teachers and paraprofessionals in her school. Topics of the professional development sessions led by Judy included:

- Use of personal digital assistances (PDAs) to conduct DIBELS assessments;
- Implementation of the templates that accompanied the lesson maps;
- Following the lesson maps to ensure fidelity to the reading program;
- Grouping students to offer differentiated instruction;
- Conducting item analysis or error analysis with the DIBELS assessments; and
- Looking at data to make instructional decisions.

As Judy needed to provide many professional development sessions on various assessment topics, she wrote that "providing current and usable data for teachers to make instructional changes" was very challenging for her.

Like Judy, Olivia also worked at a large school, which used to have three literacy coaches. Since 2009, two coaches had quit due to burnout. Olivia's school adopted a balanced language and literacy framework, which featured a daily reading workshop (60-90 minutes), writing workshop (45-60 minutes), as well as language and word study (30-

60 minutes). Teachers in her school had to design their own lessons based on the standards and students' diverse needs. To equip teachers with skills in curriculum design and implementing balanced language and literacy instruction, Olivia offered 40 hours of literacy training to new teachers, and 20 hours of ongoing training to K-5 teachers throughout the year. In addition to the training sessions, teachers at the same grade level met weekly for one hour and also participated in a grade-level Professional Learning Community once a month to discuss teaching and learning issues or to look at assessment data. In her written response, Olivia wrote:

We need to get better at using our data to fine tune our instruction... In a dream world, we would have a 'data team' or 'data person'. We don't. It's just us looking at data and trying to do it in a grade-level meeting or in-service day where there just is not enough time.

Olivia's office, situated in the "Book Room," was the place for teachers to check out guided reading books, picture books, big books, professional development materials, and various other literacy resources. It was also the place for teachers to conduct grade-level meetings and literacy team meetings. Overall, Olivia had a supportive district and was highly valued by her principals. In addition, there was an Education Foundation in place that granted funds for resources, and a yearly budget that allowed for teacher resources and updated books.

The third coach I worked with, Jill, was one of the three instructional coaches in a school district. Jill's department was created in 2008. She was in charge of the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development of a large district that included 19 schools—12 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools.

Among the 19 schools, three hired their own school-based literacy coaches, so the coaching responsibilities of Jill's two colleagues were focused on transforming the low-performing schools that did not have a coach in place—one focused on the secondary level, and the other focused on the primary level. Jill stated:

My work has been not so much within the schools as it has been. [Most of the time I work in] our main office doing a lot of things with either...committee work, or with the data gathering...a big part of my job is assessment and interpreting scores, and how that relates to instruction.

In 2011, Jill was in charge of piloting writing and social studies curricula, revising literacy and social studies standards, planning and facilitating professional development sessions, coordinating the annual state achievement test for the school district, and collaborating with a teacher to remodel her classroom into an exemplary literacy classroom.

Jill's district adopted a core reading curriculum at the elementary level. The teachers, however, were not required to teach according to the scripted teacher manuals, as those in Judy's school were. According to Jill, her district had been very flexible in allowing teachers to teach in their own way.

The three coaches in this study worked in different contexts, which featured different literacy philosophies. However, they all had a common mission—to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In the following theme, the intervening conditions that affected their work will be discussed.

Theme 4: The challenges of coaching include teacher resistance, issues with administration, being spread too thin, and burnout. Several main challenges were

encountered by the coaches in this study. In answering the question, “What are the challenges of your job?” Judy wrote:

Resistance to change by teachers and administrators, lack of unified front from administrators, providing current and usable data for teachers to make instructional changes. (Scheduling is a huge issue, but that is due to our size.) I supervise the intervention teachers, the intervention plans they are using and all materials.

During the interview, when asked, “Right now, what is the most difficult part of your job as a reading coach?” Judy stated, “Becoming really frustrating that you know we’re seven years in, and we still have some teachers not changing. They are not with what they are asked to do. So that the resistance is still there for some.” Judy explained that some teachers were resistant because they did not have the capacity to change their teaching. In an informal conversation, one of Judy’s colleagues, a veteran teacher on the school improvement team who was a good friend of Judy’s, indicated that the resistant teachers in their school were very strong willed, and they thought the way they taught was the best. Meanwhile, he mentioned part of Judy’s frustration resulted from the administrators not stepping in and asking the resistant teachers to do what they were supposed to do. Due to the stressors mentioned above, Judy missed classroom teaching very much. Additionally, her dream had changed from establishing a coaching consulting company to teaching in a community college.

Some of Judy’s frustrations were echoed by Olivia. On the clustering sheet, Olivia divided the classroom teachers in her school into “go-ers” and “silos.” During the interview, Olivia explained that the go-ers were those teachers who were on-going

learners; they reflected on their teaching to help students become better readers and writers. In contrast, the silos were the resistant teachers. Some of them were resistant because they wanted to adopt a canned reading curriculum so that they could just cover the lessons and get through their day; some of them resisted change because they feared the unknown. In addition to grouping the teachers, Olivia also put down frustration as a main category on her clustering sheet, with the following words as subcategories: leadership, burnout, overwhelming, waitress [attending to the teachers' individual needs], money, standards, testing, and traditionalism. During the interview, she explained:

The leadership is an issue, as with any school, administration has to be *totally* on board, which ours is, but...if there is not any administrator that's walking into that room, on a regular basis, that teacher will do whatever she wants, and that's a huge frustration for me. And burnout, I mean, it's overwhelming, I have 40 plus teachers in our school, and it's just me...I'm always feeling guilty because I am not meeting the needs of everybody, and that's the frustration. Of course money, you always want more money. This spring, I couldn't get my second endorsed training, because of money, which is my, my food, which is hard. Um, standards keep changing. And of course testing. Everybody in our school right now, we're very scared about not meeting AYP. And there's a lot of stress, and of course a lot of teachers teaching to the test, and that takes away from teaching good quality literacy..., so that's the frustration as well.

Olivia had requested to be assigned back to being a classroom teacher several times, but she was repeatedly turned down by her principal. The reason was that if there was not a qualified, trained coach in their school, teachers would not know how to create their

curriculum and implement balanced language and literacy instruction in their school.

Teacher resistance, issues with the administrators, being spread too thin, and burnout were the main frustrations shared by the two school-based coaches. As a district-based coach, Jill also encountered some resistant teachers. According to her experience, teachers at the secondary level tended to be more resistant. With only three years of experience, Jill's frustrations resulted from uncertainties and being spread too thin. In the interview, she explained:

Since we are new in our positions... there are a lot of questions. And trying to figure *so* many things out: what the purpose, direction, hopes, and dreams that making a difference of all those things, and along with that comes a lot of frustration, just inconsistency, try to figure it out...there're so many questions that come up every day that don't have answers. And I think right now...they probably shouldn't have answers because we're...so new to what we are doing, and there aren't enough of us. And we have just a lot of work to do and I really, I am called the coach but I really don't do as much coaching as I would like to do. So, that part was frustrating. And that's just kind of how it is and where we are at right now.

In addition to literacy coaching, Jill and her colleagues had to lead committees in other content areas such as social studies, math, and science. Overwhelmed by so many uncertainties and being spread too thin, Jill indicated that if possible, she would like to work as a school-based coach.

Theme 5: Literacy coaches use a plethora of coaching strategies to assist teacher learning. The three coaches in this study used various coaching strategies to

facilitate teacher learning. In the following discussion, I will provide some examples to explain how the strategies were used. When asked “What is the best way to help teachers change their teaching practices?” Judy wrote, “Modeling and feedback.” In the interview, Judy stated how she conducted walk-throughs, and provided teachers with feedback:

We do walk-throughs, daily, which are just like 3-10 minute observations in each classroom...And what you do is you go to one classroom and you observe, you know for 3-7 or 10 minutes. And then, I usually have my little observation notebook with me, I make any comments that I need to, and I provide my feedback via email, so I come back down to my room and I'll email them and say ‘You know, great lesson, this turned out wonderful. I love the way you are doing such and such and such. We still need to make sure you are revisiting the pre-teaching section...’ You know, there always has to be a balance there [between positive and constructive feedback].

When giving feedback to classroom teachers, Judy started by acknowledging what went well and then followed by providing constructive suggestions. In other words, Judy’s feedback was balanced between recognizing the teachers’ strengths and providing clear pointers for improving.

Olivia adopted the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) when coaching because she believed that “model, model, model, and gradual release” was the best way for teachers to learn. In the written response, Olivia wrote, “...Just like we teach our kids with... the gradual release of responsibility, we, too, must use this model with teachers.” According to L’Allier, Elish-Piper, and Bean (2010),

effective coaches are “intentional and opportunistic” (p. 549), by which they mean coaches constantly seize teachable moments. When coaching, Olivia usually conducted different activities on the continuum of the gradual release of responsibility model, including observing, co-planning, modeling, co-teaching, and conferring. In addition to the scheduled intentional coaching, Olivia also coached on-the-fly, as mentioned earlier in this chapter (see the section of “A Coach’s Day in School”).

Toll (2005) asserts, “Listening is at the heart of all literacy coaching” (p. 64). During the one-on-one conferences I observed, Olivia usually started with active listening, which involved listening attentively and using questions to guide the teachers in reflecting on their own literacy practices. She also answered the teachers’ various questions about literacy instruction and suggested related resources that the teachers could refer to. At the end of the conferences, Olivia usually assisted the teachers in setting a new goal and then scheduled a time for the next meeting or class visit (for modeling or observing).

Although Olivia was knowledgeable and experienced in literacy instruction, she was not afraid to admit her limitations. For instance, she admitted she was not very organized, so she tried to use a Google calendar to plan her schedule, record what she did for a day, and reflect on her coaching. She also admitted her limitation when she conferred with an inexperienced teacher who was troubled by a new English language learner (ELL) and told the teacher that ELL was not her expertise. She then suggested that the teacher talk to the ELL specialist, and the teacher who taught the student in the previous year.

Jill also used the gradual release of responsibility model when coaching. When

Jill piloted Lucy Calkins' writing workshop at Winner Elementary, I observed her working with the classroom teacher (Nicole) for the whole trimester. At the beginning of the trimester, Jill did all the teaching while Nicole observed how she conducted the writing workshop. In the middle of the trimester, when the focus was on conferring, Jill first showed Nicole how she guided a student in reflecting on his writing, and then she let Nicole confer with half of the students. When Jill was gone to attend conferences or meetings, Nicole tried some lessons on her own. After one trimester of observing and practicing, Nicole was able to conduct the writing workshop independently.

Jill not only modeled how to launch a writing workshop, she also showed Nicole how to be a reflective teacher by setting a good example herself. For example, during one of the weekly meetings, Jill and Nicole both felt there was a need to shorten the mini-lessons so that the students would not lose their interest and attention. Additionally, there was a need to bring in more mentor literature and hands-on activities to engage the students. In the lessons that followed, Jill adjusted the time and style of the mini-lessons by shortening the time and showing the students some good writing samples from children's literature, as well as the writing samples of her previous students.

When asked "What is your philosophy of coaching?" Jill wrote, "My philosophy of coaching revolves around building relationships and trust with teachers, then becoming a collaborative partner with them to help meet the learning needs of students." Jill practiced her philosophy by listening, respecting, and offering timely support. During the weekly co-planning meeting, Jill always started with listening actively to what was going on in Nicole's life. By telling Jill how she had been overwhelmed by the district's new science curriculum, Nicole seemed to be able to find an outlet for her stress. In deciding

how to publish the students' personal narratives, Jill and Nicole brainstormed some possible ideas together, and then Jill respected Nicole's final decision. As a veteran teacher, Nicole hesitated to use the newly installed smart board in her classroom. Jill reassured her it was fine to take time to shift from using the traditional over-head projector to the new technology. She shared her own experiences of how she adapted to the smart board and finally enjoyed using it. She also offered some tips of how to use it. In the later part of the trimester, Jill even demonstrated how to incorporate the smart board into the writing workshop. By forming a trusting relationship with Nicole, Jill was able to continue to collaborate with Nicole in establishing an exemplary literacy classroom.

To sum up, the coaches in this study used a number of coaching strategies to assist teacher learning. The strategies included providing balanced feedback, adopting the gradual release of responsibility model (intentional coaching), adopting opportunistic coaching, listening actively, and building a trusting and collaborative relationship. By incorporating the different strategies, the coaches were able to improve teaching and learning in different contexts, which will be detailed in the following theme.

Theme 6: Literacy coaching, teacher growth, and student achievement appear to be interrelated. In the clustering session, the coaches were asked to generate words, phrases, or images around the phrase "Classroom teachers, student literacy achievement, and me." Judy drew a triangle to represent the relationships among the classroom teacher, student literacy achievement, and herself. In the interview, she explained,

We are kind of a continuum, between [among] classroom teachers, student

literacy achievement and myself. I think all that I do as a reading coach affects both classroom teachers and does affect student literacy achievement, but they have to be all connected. What I do can't just help the students because the teachers have to have a part in that as well, and what I do for the classroom teachers if they are not carrying that over and bringing that back to their students, actually implementing what I am suggesting, then there becomes a disconnect in our little triangle.

Similar to Judy, Olivia stated that literacy coaches, classroom teachers, and students were all separate but connected entities. Although the coaches in this study all indicated that they could provide data showing improved student achievement, as Olivia stated, the degree to which the improvement was influenced by their coaching was difficult to determine. The coaches pointed out that the key to student literacy achievement lay in how the classroom teachers carried over what they had learned and brought it to their students. As Jill wrote, "... the teachers are the ones who have done the work. We [coaches] have merely guided them to make some instructional changes, but they are the key players in the advancement of students."

During my research, I heard many positive stories from Judy's colleagues about improvements in teaching and learning while Judy had been a reading coach there. According to Judy, "The teachers didn't have the tools to do it. They did not know how to teach them [their students]... We are actually helping the teachers make better instructional choices so that their students have higher achievement in their literacy program." According to one of Judy's colleagues, the kindergarten program used to be like a daycare, where students napped for two hours, and were not taught how to read

until first grade. After years of effort in improving teaching and learning in her school, Judy claimed that the kindergarteners are now reading by October. In 2011, approximately 10% of the kindergarteners were reading at or above the first grade level. Judy remarked:

Those kids [the kindergarteners] have been with our program since kindergarten; now they are in fifth grade. Their reading is well above where they should be, and they are applying more comprehension strategies to get meaning out of their text.

However, the improvement in student achievement cannot be attributed solely to literacy coaching. In an informal conversation, one of Judy's colleagues who served on the school improvement team indicated that their school performed considerably higher than the other Native American schools in their state, and their scores were highly correlated with the existence of the Reading First Program. He mentioned that the students were excited to receive free books through their reading program, and that parental involvement had increased under the program as well. All of these factors (i.e., literacy coaching, reading program, and parental involvement) are possible reasons why student achievement improved.

Olivia, during my first visit, conducted a whole-day teacher training workshop for a group of new teachers. During the break, some teachers told me that it had been challenging and overwhelming to develop their own curriculum when they started teaching at Oak Hill Elementary. They also shared with me their appreciation for Olivia's constant assistance because they would not have survived as first-year teachers without Olivia's guidance. I found, based on our classroom discussion and my observations, that Olivia was very knowledgeable in literacy instruction, and she had great communication

skills. I was amazed how she was able to attend to different teachers' needs in an efficient way. She was always ready to lend a helping hand to the teachers in her school. Although it cannot be proven, her efforts appear to have contributed to her school making AYP in 2010 and 2011 (in contrast to past years in which they had not made AYP), which is convincing evidence of student achievement.

As a district-based coach, Jill, although she did not work directly with many teachers, had an impact on the teaching and learning in her district in certain ways. When she was piloting Lucy Calkins' writing workshop for her district, she visited Nicole's fourth grade classroom for one hour, three times a week, and demonstrated how to launch a writing workshop on personal narratives. In addition to the classroom visits, Jill and Nicole met weekly to plan and reflect on the lessons. During the meetings, Nicole repeatedly expressed her gratitude to Jill for helping her start the writing workshop because Nicole and her colleagues were already overwhelmed by the new science curriculum they had been piloted that trimester. By observing the way Jill conducted the writing workshop for one trimester, Nicole was able to launch another writing workshop independently on fiction writing in the next trimester.

In addition, the students in Nicole's class became more engaged in writing. For instance, one time when Jill and Nicole asked the students to put away their notebooks and get ready for recess, a student whined, "Oh, I'd rather stay here writing!" The students also appreciated Jill's help. At the celebration party of the students' personal narratives, every student confidently shared their revised and edited story with their classmates in groups, and then answered questions about their writing. At the end of the party, Jill, Nicole and I took turns toasting the students' success with the mocktails

prepared by Jill and Nicole. After our toasting, a student exclaimed, “To the great teachers!” When the rest of the students echoed with “To the great teachers!” I saw the rewarding smiles on Jill’s and Nicole’s faces. That was a meaningful moment to remember, not only for the coach and the teacher, but also the students. Although Jill, like Olivia, cannot be said to have directly improved student achievement, she did contribute to improved writing instruction and student engagement.

Results of the Supplemental Strand—A Convergent Parallel Design

In the supplemental strand, an online survey was administered to 108 classroom teachers to investigate their perceptions of literacy coaching effectiveness. In the first part of the survey, classroom teachers were asked to provide demographic information. Table 10 shows a summary of the demographic information of the survey respondents.

Table 10

Demographics of Survey Respondents

	Count	%
Gender		
Female	100	92.6
Male	8	7.4
Location (State)		
Minnesota	33	30.6
North Dakota	22	20.4
Washington	19	17.6
Colorado	13	12.0
Nebraska	9	8.3
Maine	6	5.6
Alabama	2	1.9
Virginia	2	1.9
Wisconsin	2	1.9
Teaching Experience		
Less than 1 year	4	3.7
1-3 years	13	12.0
4-9 years	21	19.4
10 or more	70	64.8
Grade Level of Teaching		
Preschool	1	.9
K-2	54	50.0
3-5	43	39.8
6-8	9	8.3
9-12	1	.9
Years Their Coaches Have Been Coaching		
1 year	15	13.9
2 years	9	8.3
3 years	23	21.3
4 years	10	9.3
5 years	9	8.3
6 years	4	3.7
7 years	2	1.9
8 years	2	1.9
don't know	34	31.5
Years Having Worked with Their Coaches		
1 year	36	33.3
2 years	17	15.7
3 years	28	25.9
4 years	9	8.3
5 years	13	12.0
6 years	3	2.8
7 years	1	.9
8 years	1	.9
Time Working with Their Coaches per Week		
Less than 1 hour	69	63.9
1 hours to less than 2 hours	22	20.4
2 hours to less than 3 hours	11	10.2
More than 3 hours	6	5.6

Note. N=108.

The classroom teachers who completed the online survey (N=108) were mostly female (n=100). About half of the teachers were from the Midwestern states of Minnesota and North Dakota. Of all the teachers, 64.8% had taught for ten, or more than ten, years, and around 90% of them were teaching in K-5 in elementary schools. The coaching experience of their coaches ranged from 1 to 8 years. One third indicated that they had only worked with their coaches for one year, and the majority of them (63.9%) reported that the amount of time they worked with their coaches was less than one hour per week. The demographic information shows that literacy coaching is a relatively new phenomenon in the United States.

The second, third, and fourth parts of the online survey featured 18 closed-ended questions, investigating classroom teachers' perceptions of their coaches' characteristics, the outcomes of literacy coaching, and the effectiveness of literacy coaching relative to other professional development methods. Teachers rated items on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*), through 3 (*neutral*), to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items rated 1 or 2 were considered "disagree," and items rated 4 or 5 were considered "agree" in this analysis. The frequencies and percentages of the closed-ended questions are shown in Appendix F. The last part of the online survey consisted of four open-ended questions: (a) Please describe the characteristics of the best professional development experience you have had; (b) Do you think literacy coaching is an effective model of professional development? Why or why not? (c) What are your most important professional development needs in literacy instruction? and (d) What would you like your literacy coach to do that he/she is not doing now? What follows are the themes that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data in the survey.

Themes of the Supplemental Strand

Theme 1: Classroom teachers' current professional development needs are threefold: differentiated instruction, reading interventions, and using data to guide instruction. When asked “What are your most important professional development needs in literacy instruction?” in the open-ended question, the teachers' answers were threefold. First, the teachers wanted to learn how to implement differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Second, there was a need to know how to provide interventions to help the struggling students in their class. Finally, the classroom teachers addressed the need to use the assessment data to guide their instruction. The data suggest that literacy coaching has the potential to meet the aforementioned needs as illustrated by the following representative responses:

- “Our coach oversees our RTI literacy and she is a key resource to pinpoint interventions for our at-risk students as well as a wonderful resource for differentiation to meet the needs of all of our learners” (teacher # 42);
- “...There is constant support. Collaborative problem solving. Keeps us all on track with the data analysis” (teacher # 43); and
- “...It [literacy coaching] allows you to reflect on your practice and better analyze your data” (teacher # 45).

Theme 2: Classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching helps improve literacy instruction and student achievement. In the third part of the survey, which included seven statements, classroom teachers were asked to evaluate the outcomes of literacy coaching. The results show that classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching can improve not only literacy instruction but student achievement as well. Specifically, the classroom teachers felt that they had improved their knowledge about literacy instruction (77.8%), become more capable of using data to inform instruction

(76.0%), and become more reflective about their teaching because of literacy coaching (75.0%). Only 44.5% of the classroom teachers thought that they had improved their classroom management skills because of literacy coaching. As for the relationship between literacy coaching and student achievement, most of the teachers believed that the struggling learners in their classes had been better served (80.5%). Next, 79.6% felt that their students' overall literacy achievement had been improved because of literacy coaching. Comparatively, the teachers' perception of the statement: "Because of literacy coaching, my students have performed better on the standardized tests" was relatively low (62.9%). Table 11 displays the classroom teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching outcomes.

Table 11

Survey Results of Classroom Teacher Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Outcomes

Survey ratings	1-2	3	4-5	Mean	SD	
	Disagree	neutral	agree			
Because of literacy coaching,						
1	I have improved my knowledge about literacy instruction.	6.5%	15.7%	77.8%	3.96	.82
2	I have improved my classroom management skills.	19.5%	36.1%	44.5%	3.33	1.06
3	I have become more capable of using data and assessment to inform instruction.	6.5%	17.6%	76.0%	3.93	.85
4	I have become more reflective about my teaching.	7.4%	17.6%	75.0%	3.92	.88
5	the struggling learners in my class have been better served.	4.6%	14.8%	80.5%	4.01	.80
6	my students have performed better on the standardized tests.	5.5%	31.5%	62.9%	3.69	.78
7	my students' overall literacy achievement has been improved.	5.5%	14.8%	79.6%	3.94	.80
Average					3.83	.70

Note. N=108.

Generally speaking, the quantitative data show that classroom teachers sense that literacy coaching helps improve teaching practices and student achievement. The qualitative data support the same finding. What follows are some representative comments explaining how literacy coaching helps teaching and learning:

- "...because the professional development coach I have experience with is very experienced and qualified. Her knowledge of standards, childhood development, content, and strong communication improve my teaching and student learning" (teacher # 22);
- "...[literacy coaching] impacts student achievement immediately" (teacher # 7);

- "... Having an expert literacy coach has played a major role in helping me become a better literacy teacher. This had directly impacted the success of my students this year" (teacher # 73); and
- "...You get face-to-face discussion and reflection with the literacy coach. Also, you can see good literacy teaching modeled and used effectively" (teacher # 18).

The qualitative data also reveal why literacy coaching is effective and how literacy coaches improve teaching and learning. Some anecdotal examples describing literacy coaches' practices are:

- "...She [the literacy coach] is there when I need her, she gives me ideas, strategies, information, on how to improve my literacy instruction. She also is always looking for courses for us to help us grow as teachers" (teacher # 46);
- "...they [literacy coaches] are able to help you implement best practices, observe you teaching, give feedback and continue to encourage and support your teaching efforts" (teacher # 5); and
- "...it is very helpful to have someone with a wealth of information share with you what she knows about literacy. She has great examples and is more than willing to offer help any time of the day" (teacher # 70).

The statements mentioned above also lead to an important finding that classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching can lead to teacher growth and student achievement because literacy coaches are knowledgeable in literacy instruction and because they provide on-site, timely, continued, and personalized support and resources to teachers in a reflective and collaborative way.

One possible reason for the weaker agreement on the item of classroom management skills might be that the classroom teachers in this study already knew how to manage their classrooms quite well. Additionally, the teachers' perception of the statement: "Because of literacy coaching, my students have performed better on the

standardized tests” was not as positive as the others. It might be that teachers felt that students’ standardized tests may be influenced by many other factors, such as the method for determining students’ success, students’ socioeconomic status, as well as educational resources and funding, among many others (Toll, 2008).

Correlations revealed that the male classroom teachers in this study tended to have less positive perceptions of the literacy coaches’ positive characteristics, as well as literacy coaching outcomes and effectiveness (see Table 12). Although gender might be a factor influencing teachers’ perceptions of the three constructs (i.e., literacy coaches’ positive characteristics, literacy coaching outcomes and literacy coaching effectiveness), the huge gap between the numbers of male and female teachers (8 and 100 respectively) makes it impossible to confirm a sound correlation.

Table 12

Intercorrelations of Gender, Weekly Coaching Time, and the Three Constructs

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender ^a	—				
2. Weekly Coaching Time ^b	-.09	—			
3. Literacy Coaches' Positive Characteristics	-.30**	.20*	—		
4. Literacy Coaching Outcomes	-.24 *	.22*	.72**	—	
5. Literacy Coaching Effectiveness	-.21*	.20*	.55**	.61**	—

Note. ^a 1=female. 2=male. ^b 1=less than 1 hour. 2=about 1 to less than 2 hours. 3=about 2 to less than 3 hours. 4=more than 3 hours.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Theme 3: Classroom teachers feel that literacy coaching is more effective

than other professional development methods, except for mentoring. In the fourth part of the survey, classroom teachers were asked to compare the effectiveness of literacy coaching with previous professional development methods. Around 70% of the teachers perceived literacy coaching to be more effective than traditional one-shot workshops (76.8%) and online college coursework (70.0%). Over 60% of the teachers thought literacy coaching to be more effective than conferences (64.8%) and face-to-face college coursework (61.1%). More than half of the teachers felt literacy coaching to be more effective than reading professional literature (57.4%). Only 28.7% of them sensed literacy coaching to be more effective than mentoring. Table 13 exhibits the classroom teachers' perceptions of literacy coaching effectiveness.

Table 13

Survey Results of Classroom Teacher Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Effectiveness

Survey ratings	1-2	3	4-5	Mean	SD
	disagree	neutral	agree		
Literacy coaching is more effective than:					
1 one-shot workshops.	5.6%	17.6%	76.8%	4.04	.85
2 conferences.	8.3%	26.9%	64.8%	3.74	.85
3 face-to-face college coursework.	12.0%	26.9%	61.1%	3.68	.95
4 online college coursework.	8.4%	21.3%	70.4%	3.94	.99
5 reading professional literature.	7.4%	35.2%	57.4%	3.70	.88
6 mentoring.	18.6%	52.8%	28.7%	3.14	.83
Average				3.71	.70

Note. N=108.

The quantitative data reveal that the majority of classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching is more effective than traditional one-shot workshops, conferences, both face-to-face and online college coursework, as well as reading professional literature. Drawing from the qualitative data, the quote from teacher # 93 serves as an explanation for why literacy coaching is more effective than most of the other professional development methods: “It [literacy coaching] allows us access to someone for assistance and guidance throughout the school day and entire school year, rather than one or two PD [professional development] days here and there.”

More than half (52.8%) of the teachers responded “neutral” on the statement: “Literacy coaching is more effective than mentoring.” This perception might be because both mentoring and literacy coaching have been evolved from the concept of reading specialists (Bean, 2009; L’Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Furthermore, the nature of mentoring is the same as coaching as they both provide job-embedded, ongoing support

for teachers to learn in a reflective, collaborative way. However, it is important to note that while mentoring is only offered to new teachers, literacy coaching is provided to all teachers. Instead of hiring mentor teachers to work with beginning teachers, schools should hire literacy coaches to work with all teachers.

Theme 4: Classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching effectiveness is affected by the coaches' characteristics, qualifications, teaching experience, availability, and communication skills. In the second part of the survey, classroom teachers were asked to respond to questions about their literacy coaches' positive characteristics. The results show that most of the classroom teachers perceived that their coach had responded to their concerns (88.8%), was a good collaborator (81.5%), and had strong communication skills (79.6%). In addition, over 70% of the classroom teachers perceived that their coach let them choose what they wanted to learn or implement (72.4%) and was effective at promoting change (70.4%). The results of the classroom teachers' perceptions of literacy coaches' positive characteristics are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Survey Results of Classroom Teacher Perceptions of Literacy Coaches' Positive Characteristics

Survey ratings	1-2	3	4-5	Mean	SD
	disagree	neutral	agree		
The coach I have worked with :					
1 has responded to my concerns.	1.8%	9.3%	88.8%	4.34	.76
2 has let me choose what I want to learn/implement.	9.3%	18.5%	72.4%	3.95	1.00
3 has had strong communication skills.	6.5%	13.9%	79.6%	4.16	.93
4 is effective at promoting change.	12.1%	17.6%	70.4%	3.93	1.06
5 is a good collaborator.	9.2%	9.3%	81.5%	4.13	.96
Average				4.10	.80

Note. N=108.

Correlations revealed significant positive intercorrelations among the three constructs (see Table 12). That is to say, classroom teacher perceptions of literacy coaches' positive characteristics, literacy coaching outcomes, and literacy coaching effectiveness were intercorrelated, suggesting that coaches' positive characteristics are related to teachers' perceived literacy outcomes and effectiveness.

While the quantitative data reveal that coaches' positive characteristics (e.g., responding to teachers' concerns, letting teachers choose what to implement, having strong communication skills, being effective at promoting change, and being a good collaborator) are related to teachers' perceived literacy outcomes and effectiveness, the qualitative data provide other possible factors affecting the effectiveness of literacy coaching. For instance, some teachers indicated that literacy coaching could be more effective if their coach was more available, qualified, and experienced (teacher # 30), had better communication skills (teacher # 38), and was not a right hand man to the principal (teacher #48). Moreover, a few teachers did not think literacy coaching was effective for the following reasons:

- the coach had been out of classroom for too long (teacher # 21);
- the coach stayed away from veteran teachers (teacher # 28); and
- the coach had an administrative state of mind (teacher # 107).

Also, teachers' buy-in was essential to the success of literacy coaching, as stated by teacher # 17, "... [literacy coaching] is implemented without giving all parties the option to refuse. Buy-in must be present from all, before implementing."

To sum up, based on the perceptions of these teachers, the effectiveness of literacy coaching may be affected by the coaches' characteristics, qualifications, teaching experience, availability, communication skills, and attitude. As teacher # 85 asserted:

...I feel the job [literacy coaching] is what the person who holds it makes of it and the energy they put in it. So, finding the right person who is motivated, enjoys research and presenting information as well as stays in touch with what is going on in the classroom is key to be effective.

This finding highlights the importance of recruiting the right people as coaches. Additionally, to ensure the success of literacy coaching, it is essential to obtain teachers' buy-in before implementation.

Theme 5: Literacy coaches need to spend more time working directly with teachers. Correlations show positive intercorrelations among the weekly coaching time and the teachers' perceptions (see Table 12). Stated another way, the more time classroom teachers spent with their coaches, the more positive perceptions they tended to have in terms of their coaches' positive characteristics, as well as the outcomes and effectiveness of literacy coaching. Unfortunately, the majority (63.9%) of the teachers in this study worked with their coaches less than one hour per week, revealing that coaches did not spend much time working with individual teachers. The qualitative data offer some anecdotal explanations why literacy coaches are spread too thin:

- “Unfortunately due to our school budget being cut, my literacy coach is being pulled out of the classroom and will be splitting her with several more teachers this year. I would just like to have her back in the room.” (teacher # 12);
- “I think we have a literacy coach provided by the district. She is scheduled to be here once a week. I have not seen her in over a month. I would like more time with her.” (teacher # 30);
- “She needs more time in the classrooms. The jobs that she is given are not really that of a literacy coach, so she spends time running around doing other things that our principal has needed. A lot of her time is spent collecting and analyzing data.” (teacher # 51);
- “...able to do less paper work, more in classroom, individual work” (teacher # 69); and
- “I wish she did not have to travel to other schools. I would have her in my room and ask for more help” (teacher #90).

On top of the previous research findings that literacy coaches are spread too thin

(Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007), this finding adds to an understanding that the reason literacy coaches are spread too thin is because schools do not have enough funds to hire their own coaches, so teachers have to work with district-based coaches or multi-school-based coaches. In addition, other than working with teachers, literacy coaches need to do other tasks such as working with students, doing paper work, collecting and analyzing assessment data, and fulfilling tasks assigned by the principals.

When asked “What would you like your literacy coach to do that he/she is not doing now?” the majority of the classroom teachers in this study indicated that they would like their coaches to work one on one with them by modeling, observing, or conferring. What follows are some anecdotal examples:

- “I would love the opportunity to observe my literacy coach in action! Having the chance to observe her try new strategies with my current students would prove to be very insightful. I could benefit by learning new methods of literacy instruction, as well as observing additional classroom management strategies.” (teacher # 63);
- “Watch my current technique to see how I can improve” (teacher # 15); and
- “Meeting regularly with me to give ‘next step’ advice” (teacher # 28).

Although several researchers assert that literacy coaches should mainly work with teachers (Bean, 2009; L’Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010; Toll, 2005), several teachers in this study indicated that they would like their coaches to spend more time working with their students. For instance, teacher # 36 wrote:

Being able to work directly with the children. She is only there to help the teacher and give us new current ideas and strategies. We have many great resources but we need more hands and people to work one on one with students rather they be advanced, on level or struggling learners. Coaches should be able to work with

children to get the most benefit of two trained adults.

This finding shows that incongruence exists regarding whether a coach should provide pull-out service for students or not.

The results support the former research findings that the time literacy coaches spend with teachers is positively correlated with teachers' teaching practices and students' reading achievement (Bean et al., 2008; L'Allier & Elish-Piper, 2006; L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010). Unfortunately, literacy coaches tend to be spread too thin.

Although whether a coach should provide pull-out services to students is still debatable, it is certain that literacy coaches should spend more and most of their time coaching teachers by modeling, observing (if the teachers are comfortable), and conferring.

Merging the Two Strands

In the following discussion, the two research questions will be answered by combining the findings from the two strands, as well as from the reviewed literature.

Answers to Research Questions

Question one: What is the nature of literacy coaching? Why and how is literacy coaching different from previous professional development methods? Do teachers perceive literacy coaching to be a better method of professional development than past methods? If so, why? Based on the results from the two strands, literacy coaching is considered as a job-embedded, ongoing professional development method, which assists teacher learning in a self-directed, reflective, and collaborative way. However, literacy coaching is a demanding and stressful job because coaches have to play multiple, yet at times undefined roles. Literacy coaches work in different contexts with different philosophies of literacy instruction; some of them are district-based and

some of them are school-based. Although literacy coaching can lead to positive outcomes of teaching and learning, its effectiveness can be impeded by many factors, including the coaches' characteristics, experience, qualifications, communication skills, and attitude (not being authoritarian and judgmental), teacher resistance, issues with administration, being spread too thin, and burnout (from doing tasks unrelated to coaching such as working with students, doing paper work, collecting and analyzing assessment data, and fulfilling tasks assigned by the principals).

Literacy coaching is different from previous professional development methods (e.g., one-shot workshops, reading professional literature, taking face-to-face or online graduate classes, conferences, and mentoring) because the nature of literacy coaching is aligned with adult learning theories and the effective characteristics of professional development. Specifically, the humanist adult learning theory suggests that the affective and cognitive aspects of a person should be involved in the learning process, and a sense of discovery must come from within (self-directedness). In addition, before the highest level of learning—self-actualization—is reached, one's needs of safety, belongingness and love, and esteem must be fulfilled. Coaches must build trusting relationships with individual teachers without being authoritarian and judgmental. By doing so, the coaches fulfill the teachers' needs of safety and belongingness and love. With the ongoing support from the coaches, teachers not only increase their knowledge and skills about literacy instruction but also their confidence. Ultimately, when teachers realize their students have achieved because of their implementation of effective teaching practices, their need of self-actualization is met. The constructivist adult learning theory addresses that learning is the process of meaning-making, and meaning can be constructed either through inner

thinking or interaction with others (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). When coaching, coaches first take teachers' prior knowledge about literacy instruction and their individual needs into consideration and help teachers set personalized learning goals collaboratively. Next, coaches provide the necessary scaffolding to teachers by co-planning, modeling, co-teaching, observing, conferring, and collaborating until teachers master the new knowledge or skills of literacy instruction. During the process of coaching, teachers have various chances to reflect on their own teaching and engage in meaning-making by interacting with coaches or other teachers. That is to say, both the cognitive and social aspects of learning are involved in the process of literacy coaching. Recent research findings on professional development point out that effective professional development activities are intensive, ongoing and connected to practice. Furthermore, they should focus on student learning, address the teaching of specific curriculum content, align with school improvement priorities and goals, and build strong working relationships among teachers (see chapter II). Compared with previous professional development methods, literacy coaching is the only one that tends to contain all the characteristics mentioned above, and can be provided to all teachers.

The findings of this study show that classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching is a better professional development method than most of the previous methods. The reasons lie in that literacy coaches are knowledgeable in literacy instruction, and they provide on-site, timely, continued, and personalized support and resources to teachers in a reflective, collaborative, and self-directed way.

The reason that mentoring is considered as effective as literacy coaching might be that mentoring shares many characteristics with literacy coaching. However, while only

beginning teachers can benefit from mentoring as in induction programs, all teachers can benefit from literacy coaching.

Question two: What are the perceptions of classroom teachers and literacy coaches regarding the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement? Most classroom teachers perceive that literacy coaching improves their knowledge of literacy instruction, the ability to use assessment data to inform instruction, and the ability to reflect on their teaching practices. Moreover, classroom teachers think that struggling readers in their class have been better served due to literacy coaching. Their students have better performance on standardized tests, and their students' overall literacy achievement has also been improved. Both the quantitative and qualitative data show that the classroom teachers in this study perceive literacy coaching and student literacy achievement to be interrelated—literacy coaching could help teachers improve their instruction, which could then impact student literacy achievement. However, it is important to note that effective coaching, which leads to positive teaching and learning, only happens if the literacy coaches are qualified and effective.

Consistent with the classroom teachers' perceptions, the three coaches in this study also sense that literacy coaching, teaching, and student achievement are interrelated. From the coaches' perspectives, classroom teachers assume an essential role in this process. Literacy coaching can lead to increased student achievement only if the teachers are receptive to literacy coaching, and if they can carry over what they have learned from the coaches.

Both the classroom teachers and the literacy coaches in this study perceive literacy coaching to be related to teaching and student literacy achievement. Although

current research findings on whether literacy coaching can lead to improved student achievement are inconclusive, the findings in this study are consistent with previous research findings that literacy coaching is effective in improving instruction (Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelbert, 2005; Salzman, Rosemary, Newman, Clay, & Lenhart, 2008; Neufeld & Roper, 2003) and student achievement (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Swartz, 2005; Walpole & Blamey, 2008).

This study has identified two aspects—effective coaches and receptive teachers—that are critical to the success of literacy coaching. Specifically, effective literacy coaches should have in-depth knowledge of literacy instruction, and they should be up-to-date with current classroom practices. Moreover, they should be available to teachers and have good communication skills. Most important of all, they should not be authoritarian or judgmental. As for teachers, they should embrace the idea of lifelong learning, be willing to change, always reflect on their teaching, and most importantly, carry over and implement what they learned. With effective coaches who provide on-site and continuous support to help teachers turn knowledge and principles into effective teaching practices, and with receptive teachers who make thoughtful, informed instructional decisions to meet the literacy learning needs of students, students have a better chance to succeed.

Summary

Literacy coaching is a job-embedded, ongoing professional development which assists in teacher learning in a self-directed, reflective, and collaborative way. Literacy coaching is different from previous professional development methods because the nature of literacy coaching is aligned with not only the humanist and constructivist adult learning theories, but the effective characteristics of professional development. Most of

classroom teachers perceive literacy coaching to be a better professional development method than all the previous methods such as one-shot workshops, conferences, face-to-face college coursework, online college coursework, and reading professional literature, except for mentoring.

Both literacy coaches and classroom teachers think that literacy coaching is related to teaching practices and student literacy achievement. Yet it is important to note that effective literacy coaches, receptive teachers, and supportive administrators are all essential to fulfill the goal of literacy coaching—teacher growth and improved student achievement.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I begin by describing the contributions of the study. Next, I present the implications of this study and discuss the implications for literacy coaching in Taiwan. At the end of the chapter, I offer suggestions for further study.

Contributions of the Study

In order to have a deeper understanding of literacy coaching, a new phenomenon in the United States, I interviewed and observed three literacy coaches, and surveyed 108 classroom teachers through an online survey. This study extends previous research on literacy coaching and adds to our perception that literacy coaching is as an effective professional development method. The nature of literacy coaching not only aligns with the characteristics of effective professional development approaches, but also with humanist and constructivist adult learning theories.

Recent research reveals that effective professional development involves many characteristics. It is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice. Furthermore, it focuses on student learning, addresses specific curriculum content, aligns with school improvement priorities and goals, and builds strong working relationships among teachers (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Given the aforementioned characteristics, literacy coaching is perceived as a better type of professional development than most of the previous methods such as one-shot

workshops, conferences, face-to-face college coursework, online college coursework, and the reading of professional literature.

When coaching, literacy coaches provide timely, on-site, continuous, and personalized assistance to support teacher learning in a self-directed, reflective and collaborative way. The coaching process highlights the essence of humanist adult learning theory, which addresses the importance of self-directedness and involvement of both the affective and cognitive aspects of the person in the learning process. The process also relies on constructivist theory in that the coaching process emphasizes that learning is the process of meaning-making, which can be achieved either through inner thinking or interaction with others.

This study also suggests that although literacy coaching is a promising professional development method that can lead to teacher growth and increased student achievement, its effectiveness can be impacted by many factors such as the coaches' characteristics, qualifications, experience, and attitude. Moreover, resistant teachers, lack of administrators' full support, and the absence of a defined job description can become impediments to effective coaching.

Finally, a concern emerging from this study is that literacy coaching is a stressful and demanding job. An effective literacy coach seems destined to play many roles at the same time because the expectations and boundaries of the position are rather undefined. In providing on-site, timely, continued, and personalized support and resources to teachers in a reflective, collaborative, and self-directed way, literacy coaches are usually spread too thin. Moreover, the classroom teachers in this study frequently stated that they wanted more time with their coaches. In this study, the two more experienced school-

based coaches both indicated that they missed classroom teaching and wanted to quit coaching because of burnout caused by being spread too thin and dealing with resistant teachers. In both cases, large amounts of money and resources had been invested in training these coaches, and they had spent years building trusting relationships with the teachers in their schools; it would be a great loss for the two schools if they quit coaching. This leads to the urgent issue of how to help literacy coaches survive and thrive.

Implications of the Study

To ensure the optimal outcome of literacy coaching, the following suggestions should be considered.

- **Literacy Coaches Need a Clear Job Description**

In this study, none of the coaches were provided with a clear written job description. In addition, the coaches' time working with teachers was reduced by assigned tasks unrelated to coaching such as leading a school-visit tour, serving lunch, facilitating the fire drill, substitute teaching, and chairing the district's social studies committee. To provide a better working environment for literacy coaches, schools or districts should provide the coaches with a clear job description. Tasks that do not fit into the "instruction, assessment, and leadership" roles as proposed by Bean (2009), Walpole and Blamey's (2008) "director and mentor" roles, or Coburn and Woulfin's (2012) "educational and political" roles (see Chapter II) should not be assigned to literacy coaches.

- **The Coach-Teacher Ratio Should Be Reasonable**

Aligned with the previous research findings, the literacy coaches in this study

were spread too thin. The school-based coaches worked with more than 40 adults (including classroom teachers and/or paraprofessionals). The majority of the classroom teachers worked with their coaches less than one hour per week, and they frequently expressed their desire to have their coaches spend more time modeling, observing, and conferring with them. As the coaches have to attend to teachers' individual needs, a reasonable coach-teacher ratio could eliminate frustration for coaches, and lower the coach burnout rate. Yet, how many teachers should a coach work with? In this study, one of the coaches (Olivia) indicated working with 10 to 12 teachers would be ideal. This ratio was echoed by one of my graduate classmates, a teacher who had a positive experience with literacy coaching in her previous school. Since the ideal coach-teacher ratio is not the main focus of this study, follow-up research on this topic is needed.

- Administrators Should Be Educated About Literacy Coaching

Professional development should be offered to administrators to emphasize how literacy coaches can be supported by effective leadership, which might include participating themselves in the literacy programs, respecting literacy coaches' professional decisions, and not assigning supervisory tasks to literacy coaches. In order to provide administrators with an overall understanding of literacy coaching, and more importantly, how they can support the coaches by their leadership, the professional development should include topics such as "conceptualizations, functions, outcomes, and models of literacy coaching," "roles and functions of literacy coaches," "overview of the coaching conversation," "separating coaching from supervising," and "contexts for optimizing the success of literacy coaching" (Toll, 2007, p. 90). Additionally, the development of clear job descriptions for literacy coaches would be educational for

administrators as well.

- Literacy Coaches Need Ongoing Professional Development

In addition to the theories and practices of literacy instruction (including assessment), initial training for new literacy coaches should include leadership skills, communication skills, and mentoring skills. Toll (2008) posits that conferring is the most effective format for successful coaching. Initial training should also provide chances for coaches to observe, practice, and reflect on their coaching, especially on their conferring.

The three coaches in this study all enjoy participating in professional development activities to learn new knowledge and skills. One of the coaches, Olivia, mentioned that ongoing professional development is food for her soul. Therefore, ongoing professional development should be offered to all coaches so that they can stay up-to-date on new theories and practices in teaching, learning, and assessment, and the latest research on literacy instruction. Ongoing professional development will also help coaches to sharpen their skills in communication, mentoring, leadership, and de-stressing. By engaging in ongoing learning, they become exemplary lifelong learners, which is the key to forming a collaborative learning community in schools.

- Literacy Coaches Need Release Time to Network with Other Coaches

According to Toll (2005), “Literacy coaches work in environments in which many factors are out of their control” (p. 134). Hence, literacy coaches need to have regular release hours from work to network with other coaches. During the networking, coaches can share their positive and negative coaching experiences, and develop co-coaching relationships with other literacy coaches. With the advancement of technology, digital networking can also be considered an alternative if face-to-face networking is unfeasible

for coaches in rural areas.

- Classroom Teachers Need Release Time to Work with Literacy Coaches

“A highly qualified teaching force is a school’s most important asset, and the most important investment school boards, policy makers administrators, and other educational leaders can make is ensuring that teachers continue to learn” (American Federation of Teachers, 2002, as cited in Mraz, Algozzine, & Kissel, 2009, p. 130). Providing release time and necessary support (e.g., substitute teachers or paraprofessionals when working or conferring with coaches, and funding for professional literature for book study, just to name a few) can increase the receptiveness of teachers to work with literacy coaches collaboratively.

Implications for Literacy Coaching in Taiwan

In Taiwan, reading for pleasure is neither highly valued nor widely practiced because under the pressure of high school and college entrance exams, many teachers have to teach to the test. Reading, for many students and parents, means studying textbooks. Realizing that “...knowledge...is power and literacy is the skill that unlocks the gates of opportunity and success” (Obama, 2005), the Taiwanese government has invested a large amount of funding to promote reading. Although libraries are better equipped, and fun literacy-oriented activities have been prevalent since 2001, Taiwanese students’ interest in reading has remained low and their performance on international assessments (e.g., PISA, PIRLS, and Cambridge English exams) has not been satisfactory. To improve students’ interest and performance in reading, some measures have been either implemented or planned, such as training teacher librarians and incorporating reading into the curriculum. A system of providing literacy teachers with

continuous, on-site professional development, such as literacy coaching, has not been discussed yet. The teacher appraisal scheme, which evaluates teachers on a variety of criteria (e.g., curriculum design, instruction, classroom management, action research, participation in professional development, dedication, and attitude), has been piloted since 2006. Teachers who do not pass the evaluation are assigned mentor teachers to provide necessary assistance. Should the pilot teacher appraisal scheme be implemented to include all teachers, teachers would experience increased pressure to improve their instruction.

Literacy coaching, a job-embedded type of ongoing professional development, is an excellent way to foster reflective teaching and refine teaching practices so that effective literacy instruction is implemented in classrooms to increase student achievement. What follows are the implications of this study for literacy coaching in Taiwan.

- Framework for Literacy Coaching in Taiwan

I propose that literacy coaching be incorporated into Taiwan's current three-tier teacher support system. Figure 5 illustrates the current three-tier teacher support system (on the left) and the proposed framework for literacy coaching in Taiwan (on the right).

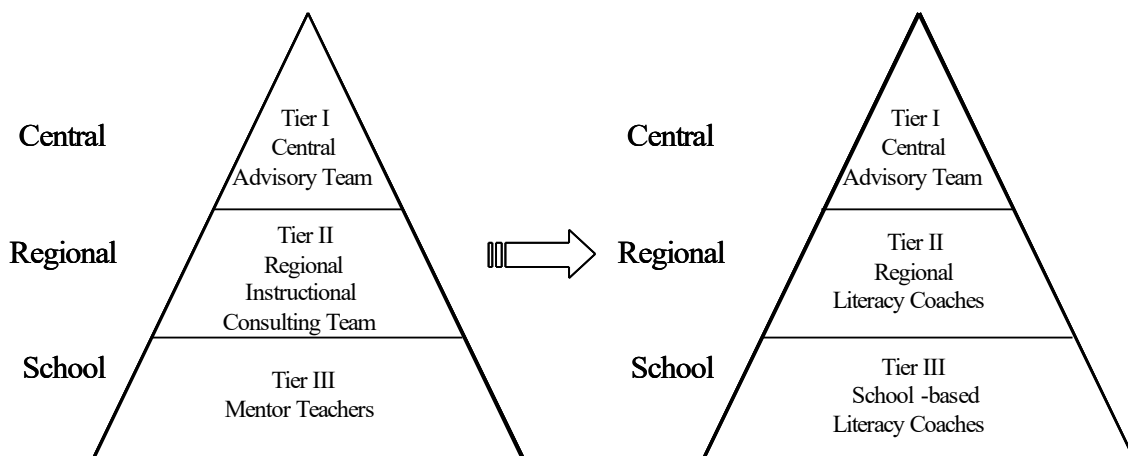


Figure 5. Current three-tier teacher support system and the proposed framework for literacy coaching in Taiwan.

In this model, the Tier I members, including experienced literacy teachers/coaches and university professors, would be placed in charge of advising, as well as planning and providing ongoing professional learning sessions to support coaches in Tier II and Tier III. Tier II literacy coaches, similar to the district-based coaches in the U.S., would be recruited by local governments to coach teachers in remote regional areas, as schools in those places are usually too small to hire their own coaches. Tier III coaches, corresponding to the school-based coaches in the U.S., would mainly coach in their own schools. Small schools located in the same neighborhood could consider hiring one shared literacy coach. Overall, the aim is to provide all literacy teachers, no matter if they are teaching Chinese or English, with on-site and continuous professional development.

- **Qualifications of Literacy Coaches**

In order to be effective, a coach must be knowledgeable in the theories and practices of literacy instruction and assessment, either in Chinese or English, depending on which field one chooses to coach. In addition, actual classroom teaching experience is

essential, not only to give coaches credibility, but also to help them maintain the classroom perspective as they work with teachers. Toll (2005) asserts, “A literacy coach who knows a great deal about literacy instruction but cannot develop relationships, build trust, and work with the non-knowledge-related issues of teaching will fail” (p. 53).

Therefore, a coach must have good skills in interpersonal communication, mentoring, and leadership.

If the current pilot teacher appraisal scheme were to be implemented nationally, literacy coaches in Tier II and Tier III would initially be trained as evaluators and mentor teachers (as detailed in Chapter II) in order to know how the evaluation and mentoring process works. Although many researchers argue that literacy coaches’ supportive function be separated from the evaluative function normally performed by principals (Kinght, 2009; Walpole & McKenna, 2004), if coaches were certified as evaluators and mentors, they would become more credible because they would have a general understanding of the evaluation and mentoring process. With this understanding, they could support teachers more effectively.

- Roles of Literacy Coaches

In my proposed model, literacy coaches would assume the instruction, assessment, leadership, mentoring, and policy-promoter roles (Bean, 2009; Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Walpole & Blamey, 2008). In their instruction role, literacy coaches would conduct such activities as observing, co-planning, modeling, co-teaching, conferring, and facilitating book studies/workshops. In their assessment role, coaches would assist teachers in “monitoring students’ understanding, monitoring engaged time, maintaining records of students’ progress, informing students about their progress, using

data to make decisions, and making judgments about students' performance" (Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 2006, as cited in Mraz, Algozzine, & Kissel, 2009, p. 130). As for the leadership role, literacy coaches would plan and lead literacy programs in individual schools, as well as integrate school-wide efforts and allocate available resources into the "school-based curriculum" as addressed in the Grade 1-9 Curriculum (see Chapter II). In terms of the mentoring role, literacy coaches would build trusting relationships with individual teachers, while not being authoritarian and judgmental. Finally, literacy coaches would promote the literacy policy and help clarify the ideals and goals of the policy.

- Support System for Literacy Coaches

Literacy coaches in Taiwan, like their counterparts in the U.S., would find their job to be both demanding and stressful. A sound support system must be provided to eliminate coach burnout. In addition to the six recommendations mentioned previously (i.e., providing a clear job description for coaches, maintaining appropriate coach-teacher ratio, educating administrators about literacy coaching, providing coaches with ongoing professional development opportunities, providing coaches with release time for networking, and providing teachers with release time for working with literacy coaches), the Minister of Education must take some measures to obtain the teachers' buy-in before the implementation of literacy coaching in Taiwan. These measures include explaining the importance of literacy coaching and how both teachers and students can benefit from literacy coaching.

- Cultural Implications

Although Taiwan is an exemplary Asian country that incorporates global thinking

and initiates changes (Collinson et al., 2009), several cultural aspects should be noted regarding the implementation of literacy coaching in Taiwan. First of all, as “protecting ‘face’ or individual dignity is a very important and delicate matter” in Taiwan (Morrison, Conaway, & Borden, 1994, p. 377), literacy coaches should be put to work with all teachers, instead of only focusing on those who do not pass the teacher evaluation. To that end, teachers would feel more comfortable working with their coaches and would not worry about being labeled as incompetent teachers. Secondly, Taiwanese tend to be indirect when expressing their thoughts and opinions. In a conferring session, both the coach and the teacher should learn to express themselves clearly yet skillfully (to protect “face” or individual dignity). Last but not least, respecting people with seniority is a virtue in Taiwanese society. This might pose challenges for young coaches working with senior teachers.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study has several limitations, which call for further studies. First, the numbers of male and female teachers are not evenly distributed, so whether gender influences teacher perceptions of literacy coaching should be further researched by recruiting equal numbers of male and female participants. Possible differences in coaching styles between male and female coaches, and the relationship among the coaches’ gender, teacher growth, and student achievement is worthy of further investigation. Second, the assertion that literacy coaching is interrelated with teacher growth and student achievement is based on the teachers’ and coaches’ self-reported data, not students’ actual testing results. Future large scale research should include both self-reported data and student achievement scores to triangulate. Researchers interested in

investigating the effectiveness of literacy coaching can consider adopting an experimental design that compares teaching practices and student performance before and after literacy coaching. Third, another area that needs further study is the effect of leadership and teacher resistance on literacy coaching. According to Toll (2008), “Resistance...often stems from anxiety” (p. 61). The reasons why teachers are resistant to change, as indicated by the participants in this study, include teachers’ lack of teaching capacity, the need for autonomy (being able to teach what makes sense to them), their different philosophies of literacy instruction, and their fears. Currently, little research has been done to address the issue of teacher resistance in the field of literacy coaching, let alone transforming resistant teachers through strong leadership. Further studies on these topics will benefit many literacy coaches and administrators in the future.

Conclusion

In this study, I have explored the nature of literacy coaching, and investigated the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement. The findings show that literacy coaching is effective in improving teaching and learning, and furthermore that the reason for this effectiveness is that literacy coaches are knowledgeable about literacy instruction, and that they provide teachers with personalized support and resources that are job-embedded, timely, ongoing, and provided in a reflective and collaborative way. However, literacy coaching can be a demanding, stressful job because an effective coach has to play many roles well at the same time. Additionally, the effectiveness of coaching can be hindered by factors related to the coaches’ personalities, qualifications, experience, communication skills, and attitude (i.e., judgmental or authoritarian), as well as teacher resistance and lack of administrative

support. To obtain the maximal outcome of literacy coaching, many policies and practices must be in place, including providing a clear job description for coaches, maintaining an appropriate coach-teacher ratio, providing professional development for both administrators and literacy coaches, providing release time for coaches to network with their counterparts in other schools, and providing release time for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development.

By conducting this study, I had the opportunity to visit different schools in the United States, and interact with different principals, coaches, reading specialists, teachers, and students. I admire the coaches' professional knowledge about literacy instruction, and feel the teachers who were able to work with them were fortunate. When I was a novice teacher myself, I had many doubts when I taught, and the uncertainties ranged from selecting suitable teaching materials, instructional methods, and assessments, to how to make a difference in my students' lives. I wish I had had a coach to assist me, and I hope I can have a coach when I resume teaching, although I will be teaching in a university. Beginning with peer-coaching with one or two of my colleagues might be a good way to start.

Setting my sights on the future of Taiwan, I hope that every literacy teacher can work with a literacy coach so that together they can continue learning new knowledge and skills about literacy instruction and engage in life-long learning. With the collaboration of the stakeholders of literacy education, students will have better chances to receive quality literacy education, which will increase their opportunities to succeed in all walks of life. By planting the seed of literacy coaching in Taiwan with this study, it is

my sincere hope that it will grow into an enormous tree that will benefit many Taiwanese teachers and students.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Clustering Sheet

**Please cluster around the phrase,
“Classroom teachers, student literacy achievement, and me”**
(You may generate words, phrases, or images that come to mind.)

Appendix B

Personal Information Sheet

Personal Information

1. Name:
Pseudo name for yourself:
Pseudo name for your school/district:
2. Birth year:
3. Educational Background: University /Major/Year
 - 1) Undergraduate:
 - 2) Master's:
 - 3) Doctoral:
4. Teaching Experience: School/Title/Year
5. Coaching/Administrative Experience: Affiliation/ Title/Year

Appendix C

Questions for Written Response

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your philosophy of teaching literacy?
2. What is your philosophy of coaching?
3. What is the reading curriculum in your school/district?
4. What do you do as a literacy coach? (job description)
5. Why do you want to become a literacy coach?
6. Why were you selected?
7. How does your experience as a classroom teacher influence you as a coach?
8. What are the exciting aspects of your job?
9. What are the challenges of your job?
10. What is the best way to help teachers change their teaching practices?
11. How do you deal with teachers who are resistant to change?
12. How do teachers learn best?
13. What kind of professional development activities do you participate in as a learner?
14. What characteristics should an effective literacy coach have?
15. What advice would you have for those who want to be a coach?
16. What advice would you have for those who are new literacy coaches?
17. How do you know when you have been effective in improving student achievement?
Does the school/district have any data?
18. How does the school or district support your work (e.g., training, and resource)?

Appendix D

Survey for Pilot Study

Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Survey

The purpose of this survey is to investigate classroom teachers' perceptions of the relationship between literacy coaching and student literacy achievement. It takes about 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. This survey is anonymous. I appreciate your time and willingness to help.

Mei-lan Lo
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I. Demographics:

1. Gender:

Female Male

2. Location of your school:

North Dakota Minnesota other (please specify)

3. Size of your school:

Less than 200 students 200-800 students More than 800 students

4. How long have you been teaching?

Less than 1 year 1-3 year(s) 4-9 years 10 years and above

5. What level are you teaching?

P K-2 3-5 6-8 9-12

6. Is your literacy coach one-school or multi-school?

one-school multi-school other (please specify)

7. How many years has your literacy coach been coaching?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+ years I don't know

8. How many year have you been working with your literacy coach?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+ years

9. How much time per week do you work with your literacy coach?

Less than 1 hour About 1~less than 2 hours

About 2~less than 3 hours More than 3 hours (please specify)

II. Perceptions of Literacy Coaches-Experiences

Please rate each of the statements below by selecting the appropriate option:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	The coach I have worked with has taken time to hear my concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	The coach I have worked with has responded to my concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	The coach I have worked with has addressed my needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	The coach I have worked with has provided necessary support.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	The coach I have worked with has let me choose what I want to learn/implement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	The coach I have worked with has had strong communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	The coach I have worked with is knowledgeable about literacy instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8.	The coach I have worked with is effective at promoting change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9.	The coach I have worked with has worked well with administrators.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	The coach I have worked with is a good collaborator.	1	2	3	4	5	6

III. Perceptions of Literacy Coaching-Teacher Change

Please rate each of the statements below by selecting the appropriate option:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I have changed my philosophy about literacy instruction because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	I have improved my knowledge about literacy instruction because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	I have improved my classroom management skills because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	I have improved my teaching strategies/skills because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	I have become more capable of using data and assessment to inform instruction because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	I have become more reflective about my teaching because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	I have become a better teacher because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6

IV. Perceptions of Literacy Coaching-Student Growth

Please rate each of the statements below by selecting the appropriate option:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	My students have become better readers because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	My students have become better writers because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	The struggling learners in my class have been better served because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	My students have performed better on the standardized tests because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	My students' overall literacy achievement has been improved because of literacy coaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6

V. Perceptions of Literacy Coaching-Effectiveness

Please rate each of the statements below by selecting the appropriate option:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Literacy coaching is more effective than one-shot workshops.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	Literacy coaching is more effective than conferences.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	Literacy coaching is more effective than face-to-face college coursework.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	Literacy coaching is more effective than online college coursework.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	Literacy coaching is more effective than study groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	Literacy coaching is more effective than reading professional literature.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7.	Literacy coaching is more effective than mentoring.	1	2	3	4	5	6

VI. Open-ended Questions:

1. Please describe the characteristics of the best professional development experience you have ever had.
2. What do you like/dislike about literacy coaching?
3. Do you think literacy coaching is an effective model of professional development? Why or why not?
4. What are your most important professional development needs in literacy instruction?
5. What would you like your literacy coach to do that he/she is not doing now?
6. According to your experience, what is the relationship among you, your literacy coach, and your students' literacy achievement?
7. What would your school or your teaching look like without a literacy coach?

*Please write down your comments and suggestions for this survey.

Appendix E

Survey for Formal Investigation

Classroom Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Effectiveness Survey

The purpose of this survey is to investigate classroom teachers' perceptions about literacy coaching effectiveness. It takes about 10 minutes to complete the survey. You will be entered to win a \$100 gift card at Target after you complete the survey. I appreciate your time and willingness to help.

Mei-lan Lo
Doctoral Student
Department of Teaching and Learning
University of North Dakota
701-777-9400
mei.lan.lo@und.edu

I. Demographics:

1. Gender:

Female Male

2. Location of your school:

North Dakota Minnesota other (please specify)

3. How long have you been teaching?

Less than 1 year 1-3 year(s) 4-9 years 10 years and above

4. What level are you teaching?

P K-2 3-5 6-8 9-12

5. How many years has your literacy coach been coaching?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+ years I don't know

6. How many year have you been working with your literacy coach?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+ years

7. How much time per week do you work with your literacy coach?

Less than 1 hour About 1~less than 2 hours

About 2~less than 3 hours More than 3 hours (please specify)

II. Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Coaches' Characteristics

Please rate each of the statements below by selecting the appropriate option:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The coach I have worked with :						
1.	has responded to my concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	has let me choose what I want to learn/implement.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	has had strong communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	is effective at promoting change.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	is a good collaborator.	1	2	3	4	5

III. Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Outcomes

Please rate each of the statements below by selecting the appropriate option:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Because of literacy coaching,						
1.	I have improved my knowledge about literacy instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I have improved my classroom management skills.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I have become more capable of using data and assessment to inform instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I have become more reflective about my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	the struggling learners in my class have been better served.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	my students have performed better on the standardized tests.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	my students' overall literacy achievement has been improved.	1	2	3	4	5

IV. Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy Coaching Effectiveness

Please rate each of the statements below by selecting the appropriate option:		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Literacy coaching is more effective than:						
1.	one-shot workshops.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	face-to-face college coursework.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	online college coursework.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	reading professional literature.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	mentoring.	1	2	3	4	5

V. Open-ended Questions:

1. Please describe the characteristics of the best professional development experience you have ever had.
2. Do you think literacy coaching is an effective model of professional development? Why or why not?
3. What are your most important professional development needs in literacy instruction?
4. What would you like your literacy coach to do that he/she is not doing now?

Thanks for taking the survey. Please leave your email if you want to be entered to win a \$100 Target gift card at:

Appendix F

Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Results

Construct 1: Literacy Coaches' Positive Characteristics											
The coach I have worked with :		1 strongly disagree		2 disagree		3 neutral		4 agree		5 Strongly agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	has responded to my concerns.	1	.9	1	.9	10	9.3	44	40.7	52	48.1
2	has let me choose what I want to learn/implement.	2	1.9	8	7.4	20	18.5	41	38.0	37	34.4
3	has had strong communication skills.	1	.9	6	5.6	15	13.9	39	36.1	47	43.5
4	is effective at promoting change.	2	1.9	11	10.2	19	17.6	37	34.3	39	36.1
5	is a good collaborator.	1	.9	9	8.3	10	9.3	43	39.8	45	41.7
Construct 2: Literacy Coaching Outcomes											
Because of literacy coaching,		1 strongly disagree		2 disagree		3 neutral		4 agree		5 strongly agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I have improved my knowledge about literacy instruction.	0	0	7	6.5	17	15.7	57	52.8	27	25.0
2	I have improved my classroom management skills.	6	5.6	15	13.9	39	36.1	33	30.6	15	13.9
3	I have become more capable of using data and assessment to inform instruction.	1	.9	6	5.6	19	17.6	56	51.9	26	24.1
4	I have become more reflective about my teaching.	1	.9	7	6.5	19	17.6	54	50.0	27	25.0
5	the struggling learners in my class have been better served.	1	.9	4	3.7	16	14.8	59	54.6	28	25.9
6	my students have performed better on the standardized tests.	1	.9	5	4.6	34	31.5	55	50.9	13	12.0
7	my students' overall literacy achievement has been improved.	1	.9	5	4.6	16	14.8	63	58.3	23	21.3
Construct 3: Literacy Coaching Effectiveness											
Literacy coaching is more effective than:		1 strongly disagree		2 disagree		3 neutral		4 agree		5 strongly agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	one-shot workshops.	0	0	6	5.6	19	17.6	48	44.4	35	32.4
2	conferences.	0	0	9	8.3	29	26.9	51	47.2	19	17.6
3	face-to-face college coursework.	1	.9	12	11.1	29	26.9	45	41.7	21	19.4
4	online college coursework.	2	1.9	7	6.5	23	21.3	39	36.1	37	34.3
5	reading professional literature.	0	0	8	7.4	38	35.2	40	37.0	22	20.4
6	mentoring.	2	1.9	18	16.7	57	52.8	25	23.1	6	5.6

Note. N=108. f=frequency. %=percent.

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