

Coaches' Perception of their Roles and Early Childhood Teachers' Cognitive Coaching Experiences

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Abstract

Until recently, less attention has been paid to how coaches' different perceptions of their roles may affect early childhood teachers' coaching experiences. This article investigates how two coaches in two school districts interpret the critical elements of cognitive coaching during National Board Certification. With a comparative case study, the findings suggest that two coaches had seemingly different perceptions of coaching roles depending on the analysis of teachers' urgent needs and perceived role as a coach. First, two coaches showed different degrees of applying cognitive coaching principles. Second, coaches had a different focus in providing either cognitive stimulation or emotional support. Finally, while one coach set up a distant and formal relationship with teachers, other teachers had accessible relationships with teachers. We discussed how different perceptions of coaching roles and teachers' coaching experiences could inform both coaches and teachers concerning teachers' professional development.

Keywords: perceptions of coaching roles; cognitive coaching; experienced early childhood teachers; professional development; National Board Certification.

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Introduction

There is increasing awareness that teachers need well-qualified coaches to improve their teaching practices (Buell et al., 2010; Göker, 2020; Mweemba et al., 2021). Studies have demonstrated that when teachers are provided with timely and constructive feedback from instructional coaches, they can better analyze their classroom interaction with children (Hamre et al., 2012). Coaching has been less studied in the field of early childhood education. Although coaching is a personal process where coaches' experience, knowledge, values, and beliefs influence the way coaches to facilitate coaching conversation and relationships with teachers, few studies have attempted to uncover coaches' perceived role and professional development experiences.

Among multiple ways to provide coaching, cognitive coaching is one of the ways that capitalize upon teachers' cognitive processes and supports reflective thinking (Costa & Gamston, 1994; Mweemba et al., 2021). Cognitive coaching aims to mediate teachers' critical thinking and promote self-directed learning by engaging in coaching conversations. Cognitive coaching also provides a new lens through to think about existing information and critique teaching practices (Baker, 2008). In cognitive coaching, the coach and teachers develop an empathic relationship, where one person helps another person think deeply about important decisions. In this sense, the coach plays a role as a facilitator and not a teacher (Edwards, 2001). The coach must withhold judgment and gently probes to enhance teachers' clarity and precision in the teacher's thinking. The basis for cognitive coaching is mutual trust and a desire for self-knowledge and change.

Cognitive coaching is challenging to implement in real contexts because teachers usually have resistance when they feel cognitive dissonance, which is necessary for a fundamental transformation of teaching (Jacobs et al., 2018; Netolicky, 2016). Unlike coaching for business industries or nursing, cognitive coaching plays a unique role in promoting teachers' professional development. Coach plays a critical role in facilitating teachers' independent and reflective thinking by probing questions. As teachers typically resist uncertainties and cognitive disequilibrium, the coach needs to provide adequate support to unwilling teachers for authentic changes. During this process, the coach has a dual job of providing emotional support and probing for self-reflection and critical thinking. Although less studied, few

empirical studies have indicated that coaches rarely achieve this balance between providing adequate emotional support and critical reflection. Coaches make common mistakes by being too directive, too prescriptive, too corrective, too disengaged, too self-focused, or too social.

In this sense, National Board Certification (NBC) provides a context where coaching is critical in supporting candidate teachers' professional development process. NBC is a voluntary certification for standards-based educational reform policy crafted in response to the low quality of teaching in the United States. NBC is an advanced teaching credential to recognize effective and accomplished teachers who meet high standards. During the NBC process, teachers experience professional development as they need to analyze their teaching practices. NBC is a rigorous process in which teachers must complete four portfolio entries and six constructed response exercises that assess their content knowledge (National Board for Professional Standards, 2012). A wide range of research on NBPTS exhibits a consensus that the process is meticulous, exhaustive, grueling, and scary. Typically, teachers invest 200-400 hours in successful bids for certification (Park et al., 2007).

As such, an increasing number of studies sought to find the optimal way to support candidate teachers during the NBC process (Grochocki, 2018; Pastore, 2016). Among different types of support, coaching plays a vital role as the rigor of the NBC process can challenge and overwhelm teachers (Diaz, 2013; Hunzicker, 2011). Hence, both their state and the school district usually provide them official support. Beyond tangible material support, teachers' cognitive support in mentoring or coaching is an urgent and critical need. At present, most school districts hold district support meetings to help the teachers. Studies indicate that support networks help teachers learn standards, review the subject matter and pedagogy, practice writing, and understand NBC assessment (Bales, 2004; Freund, 2005; Lustick, 2002; Lustick & Sykes, 2006; Park et al., 2007).

Although coaching plays a critical role in shaping teachers' professional development experiences, there is a lack of clarity about this role. Although there is specific training for cognitive coaching, cognitive coaching can be implemented in varying ways. The nature of coaching could often be idiosyncratic depending on the coach's perceptions of their roles (Butler & Cuenca, 2012). This study draws on and is guided by a cognitive framework that

characterizes sense-making in the implementation process of education policy initiatives (Spillane et al., 2002). The cognitive framework provides a lens for understanding how an individual coach's cognition is situated within particular professional communities that share structures, traditions, and role expectations (Spillane et al., 2002). This cognitive framework is a valuable lens for investigating how individual coaches would interpret and apply the same cognitive coaching differently due to their situated cognition. The coaches' knowledge, beliefs, and cognitive coaching practices rely on their varied lenses within their professional communities. Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe and compare how individual coaches make sense of cognitive coaching as they engage in teachers' professional development process.

Method

Context and Participants

The context of this study took place at the Center for Professional Development. It is a state-level organization since 2005. This organization supports NBC candidates through a statewide network and provides training for coaches throughout the state. Ms. Crandall is the Executive Director at the Center for Professional Development at the state level. After a focus group interview with district facilitators and the director of a statewide agency that supports NBC teachers, we selected two coaches in two districts. An interview with Crandall validated this finding, as she commented that Ms. Emery is a much more emotional person than Swadener, and she will "love teachers to death." At the same time, Ms. Swadener has the nickname "Miss Tough Love," which indicates that she holds every NBC candidate rigorously accountable for demonstrating high standards.

The coaches

Two coaches participated in this study. Ms. Swadener is a coach at Welford Unified School District (WUSD) is known for its substantial support for NBC candidates. Ms. Swadener is working with eight coaches in WUSD. She has a unique role in the district,

designed specifically for her due to her passionate advocacy for NBCTs. She is a Nationally Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) with an Early Childhood Generalist Certificate (EC-GEN). She has developed a part of the teacher education program in Florida.

WUSD has 73 elementary schools, 18 middle schools, and 18 high schools. As of March 2012, the district's population was 61.3% Hispanic, 24.1% non-Hispanic White, 5.6% Black, and 9% others. It is one of the top five districts in NBC success, with 45 NBCTs in 2010. It is known for the tremendous financial, administrative, and human resources support for its NBC candidates. WUSD holds biweekly teacher support meetings and has a long history of supporting the NBC process. It was the only district in the Southwestern part of the U.S. to have a full-time coordinator, and eight paid coaches paid \$2,000 in 2011–2012. While working as a kindergarten teacher, she advocated supporting NBCT candidates to the superintendent at WUSD. This encounter led to her new career. She created a support network that is supportive but highly challenging.

Ms. Emery is a coach at Rosemary School District (RSD). Ms. Emery was the first NBCT in LSD, receiving an EC-GEN in 2008. She has a master's degree in education and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. She runs the monthly teacher support meetings, and she has 22 teachers in her charge: she also supports novice teachers in her district.

RSD is a small school district in the Southwestern U.S. western region at the macro level, with nine elementary and four middle schools. The population's racial and ethnic composition is 74.3% non-Hispanic White, 15.4% Hispanic, 3.5% Black, and 6.8% others. RSD is in the early stages of supporting NBC teachers, with only one NBCT. RSD provides a one-time \$5,000 stipend to those who achieve NBC. In 2011–2012, there were 32 NBC candidates.

The Teachers

Two teachers participated in this study. Ms. Lopez is the only preschool teacher at Desert Elementary School to pursue NBC to achieve an EC-GEN. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and an endorsement in early childhood education. She has six years of teaching experience in early childhood classrooms. In her early forties, she has a

Hispanic background and is a single mother of three children. She teaches preschool in the Parent and Child Education Program, designed for families with low socioeconomic backgrounds in her predominantly Hispanic student population. She was the only teacher in her school and pursuing the Early Childhood Generalist Standards at WUSD.

Ms. Jacobs was working with Ms. Emery. In her middle thirties, Ms. Jacobs, a European American, English-speaking woman, was invited to the study. She has eight years of teaching experience, five years in second grade and three in fourth grade. She teaches at Rock Elementary School, a Title I school, where 78% of her students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Nineteen languages are spoken in this school, and 65% of the student population is of Hispanic background. She and four other teachers at the school pursued NBC during the 2011–2012 school year.

Data Collection

This study incorporated semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Data were collected by semi-structured interviews with two coaches and two teachers. Participant observation was also used as a supplementary source of data to understand different perspectives and interaction dynamics. The coach was interviewed three times: November 2011 and January and March or April 2012. Each was asked about the nature of cognitive coaching and support in the district meetings. Each interview took about one hour.

The first set of questions that aim to investigate types of support coaches provided include, “What are the things that candidates ask you for support?”, “In what ways did you support the teacher’s NBPTS process?”, “Please walk me through your typical ways of supporting candidates?”, “What do you think is the best kind of support for the candidates?”, “What is the role of the candidate support provider?”.

The second set of questions was utilized to uncover two coaches’ perceptions of their role as coaches. These questions included, “as a candidate support provider, would you tell the area you can’t deal with and the area you can support?”, “Would you describe me as cognitive coaching using some specific examples?”, “How do you deal with candidate’s

questions or their request for advice?”, “ If you are not giving direct answers, are there any reasons?”, “When coaching the candidate, there might be some boundaries where you might not want to tell the candidates to figure it out by themselves,” “Would you tell me more about your boundaries as a candidate support provider?”. In subsequent interviews, the interview questions were worded to clarify, confirm, or refute evidence from previous data collection phases, including previous interview transcripts, participant observation, and field notes.

The author conducted an average of five semi-structured interviews with two teachers in November 2011 and January, March, and April 2012. Each interview lasted between 60 and 120 minutes and had an average of 20 questions, including, “When you had challenges, which resources did you turn to?”, “What were the main resources available to you?” and “Can you explain how exchanging emotional support helped you?” What do you think are the most urgent needs candidates want to have during the process? All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed as soon as possible while the memory of the interaction was fresh. All of the participants were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were inseparable because recursive data collection methods were used, and further analyses of the data led to the collection of additional data (Creswell, 2012). The researcher read and reread the transcriptions and identified potential subcategories by clarifying the overlapping themes and patterns within each case and then across the two cases. Additionally, trustworthiness was established through triangulation of data, member checks, and peer examination. Several triangulation procedures were used. Multiple sources of information from different levels of implementing agents offered a rich array of perspectives at different time points. Member checking was another crucial part of this research, where the researcher returned to ask the participants whether the interpretation was correct. Additionally, a researcher journal was used for self-reflection, which enabled the researcher to identify prejudices and prevented the researcher from taking any particular predefined pathway.

Findings

The findings are categorized into three themes: strict versus lenient application of cognitive coaching, focus on self-comprehension versus emotional support, distant versus accessible coaching relationships. All the data are presented by describing coaches' perceived roles followed by teachers' cognitive coaching experiences.

Strict versus Lenient Application of Cognitive Coaching

Perceptions of coaching roles.

Ms. Swadener and Ms. Emery have common ground that coaches need to help teachers analyze and reflect upon their practices. Both coaches were also aware that teachers had numerous challenges during the NBC process. As cognitive coaching aims to mediate teachers' thinking process with probing questions, teachers often felt frustrated due to the lack of direct instructions. As teachers were overwhelmed by the requirements of writing teaching portfolios during the NBC process, teachers had more urgent needs for consultation and directions. The following statements illustrate how two coaches understood teachers' challenge for self-directed learning and teachers' needs to be told the correct answers:

They come to National Board, and they're perplexed because this is the first time no one will tell them what to do. That creates frustration for teachers because that's not what they want. They want to be told, "this is right, this is wrong. The reality is that we don't know. (Ms. Swadener, November).

The hardest thing I think for teachers sometimes to understand is that there isn't an answer, no answer, no perfect lesson, and there is no right way to analyze students' work. It is very personal and different. It is not my job to give the answers because I don't have the answers. (Ms. Emery, April).

As seen in the above statements, both coaches knew teachers had many challenges in figuring out answers after cognitive coaching conversations. Ms. Swadener understood that

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teachers want to hear the correct answers from the coach. Similarly, Ms. Emery was aware that teachers had difficulty analyzing the classroom interaction with students. However, the two coaches had different views on how candidate teachers could complete the professional development process.

While Ms. Swadener believed that the candidate could be successful only when they became autonomous and independent, Ms. Emery believed balancing time alone and consultation with a coach is essential. Mr. Swadener believed her role was to let teachers figure out what they needed, no matter how confused and uncomfortable the self-directed learning process was. She felt critical of a formal teacher preparation program where teachers had minimal experience analyzing their teaching practice. She said teachers were used to merely following instructions according to the syllabus without a critical thinking process. On the contrary, Ms. Emery believed that teachers must balance time with a coach and time by themselves. She thought coaching attributed with a big piece of the reflection. She commented that “time alone with your computer, with student work, with an example lesson that’s on videotape, I think that that’s impactful, to help candidates reflect,” indicating that she emphasizes the balance between time for coaching and self-reflection.

There was also a difference in the degree to which two coaches apply cognitive coaching principles. The following comments show how two coaches dealt with this dilemma differently based on their understanding of what makes professional development successful and their perceived role as a coach.

So the boundaries are complex because it also depends on whether you know the teachers “have it” (potential to be exemplary teachers) or not. If teachers “have it,” then it’s your job to get it out of them. But if they don’t have it, it’s your job to help them find resources to figure it out. (Ms. Swadener, April)

There are sometimes I take my coaching hat off. There are times when, if they do need advice, to the best of their ability, I’ll give them advice, and I’ll consult. There are times where, if they do need advice, to the best of my ability, I’ll give them advice, and I’ll consult. I’ll tell them with a fine line if maybe there are other options, so that’s the extent to which the support I provide and a little touch on cognitive coaching. (Ms. Emery, November 2011)

Ms. Swadener had a strict application of cognitive coaching principles by forcing teachers to figure out answers themselves. Ms. Swadener persistently let the teachers find the answers by looking for other resources. Ms. Emery had a lenient application of cognitive coaching. For instance, Mr. Peterson was more flexible in interpreting cognitive coaching guidelines and would give teachers advice and consultation. Moreover, Ms. Swadener applied cognitive coaching more strictly than Ms. Emery, who was more sympathetic to teachers' emotional needs and challenges. Ms. Peterson takes multiple roles as a cheerleader, consultant, and cognitive coach. Ms. Emery would occasionally take her coaching hat off and collaborate with teachers. When it is necessary, she will give them advice and consultation. She would even suggest better sentences for the teaching portfolios as many of the teachers had difficulty in writing teaching portfolios.

Teachers' cognitive coaching experiences

The two teachers in this study did not like cognitive coaching experiences as they feel challenged and frustrated. The NBC process was a rigorous process where they needed to analyze their teaching practices in line with the Professional Teaching Standards. However, both of the coaches did not readily provide any suggestions or feedback the teacher needed. The following statements show the two teachers' frustrations with not getting answers during the cognitive coaching:

I asked her once, "Well, I'm having trouble understanding the portfolio, the directions for this" ...She's like, "yeah, but I'm not supposed to tell you that. They tell you, let's look at your rubric, read this, and read. So it is in your binder. Everything is in your binder. It's like I'm supposed to find it myself." (Ms. Lopez, March)

If I go to Ms. Emery, please be straight with me, take off the hat, and tell me what you think. There were times when I would ask her stuff. She would give you an answer. (Ms. Jacobs, May 01)

Ms. Lopez had difficulty figuring out the NBC process requirements and desired to obtain instant feedback and specific answers from Ms. Swadener. Ms. Lopez participated in the district meetings without a single absence during the first several months. Because Ms.

Swadener held strict expectations, and all refused to give direct answers to Ms. Lopez's questions. Instead of giving feedback, Mr. Swadener would push her to turn to the binders to find the answers by herself. Ms. Lopez felt that when she asked something, the door was closed. It was not helping her or supportive. She said that she could even say that she did not get any coaching. Similarly, Ms. Jacobs felt frustrated by the cognitive coaching and even said that she hated cognitive coaching to a certain degree. She felt that her needs for specific feedback, advice, and suggestions were constantly unmet. However, Ms. Jacobs occasionally received immediate suggestions and advice from Ms. Emery.

Different Focuses: Self-comprehension versus Emotional Support

Perceptions of coaching roles.

Ms. Swadener and Ms. Emery have a shared understanding that cognitive coaching is “a way of mediating the teachers’ thinking and making them reflect about their teaching and lesson.” These coaches understood that they need to mediate the teachers’ thinking by asking probing questions to encourage autonomy instead of giving answers. However, Ms. Swadener prioritized cognitive support, while Ms. Emery focused on providing emotional support to teachers. On the contrary, Ms. Emery highlighted that the teachers’ most central need is encouragement or cheerleading. Ms. Petereson understood that teachers might feel overwhelmed by a massive amount of information and works that need to be done. Therefore, Ms. Emery believed that the coach needs to provide emotional support for the teachers. The following statement illustrates Ms. Swadener’s priority in cognitive stimulation instead of Ms. Emery’s emphasis on teachers’ needs to “be lifted.”

Because there’s limited experience with analyzing your profession and teaching practice, their most urgent need is comprehension. (Ms. Swadener, April)

I think that the most significant need is for. I think they need encouragement. I think they need a cheerleader, I think they need, whether that’s a coach, whether that’s their principal, maybe it’s a colleague, I think encouragement and cheerleading along the way are essential. (Ms. Emery, January).

While Ms. Swadener focused on helping individual teacher's autonomy and cognitive interpretation process, Ms. Emery paid more attention to teachers' social and emotional reactions to determine where the teachers needed encouragement from the coach and their colleagues. Specifically, Ms. Swadener defined the most critical role as her role as a cognitive coach. Ms. Swadener focused on providing proving questions to promote teachers' critical reflection. She described her roles as cognitive coach, administrator, and advocate for getting more resources. In contrast, Ms. Emery meets teachers' emotional needs as friends, advisers, assistants, and cognitive coaches. Notably, Ms. Emery emphasizes providing emotional support to teachers as an encourager, cheerleader, and friend. She also mentioned her role as a cognitive coach after describing her role as an encourager and cheerleader.

Teachers' cognitive coaching experiences.

As the two coaches provide different types of support to teachers, teachers had different ways of problem-solving their difficulties during the NBC process. Ms. Lopez made a conscious effort to ask questions about her practices numerous times because she knew she was accountable for her process. She learned that her coach would not provide any specific answers or feedback she wanted. While frustrated, she was engaged in the critical self-reflection, as she struggles to write teaching portfolios. In contrast, Ms. Jacobs knew that her coach will always provide emotional support when needed. Therefore, she commented she always has Ms. Emery in her back pocket as a resource.

Yes, that's what I was saying. I reflect on it. I teach a lesson, and I'm always thinking, 'was it successful?' 'could I have done better?' 'maybe this time I'll do it this way.' They weren't engaged; what can I do to get them engaged. The grouping was not good. I'm constantly assessing myself for what I need to do and how I can improve it. (Ms. Lopez, November)

She's been through the process, so she knows. She knows what I'm stressing about, who I can show a video to and say, "What do you think? Is it good, is it bad? Tell me the truth, if it's bad, just tell me." and she will. (Ms. Jacobs, November)

Ms. Lopez exhibited isolation and frustration due to the lack of emotional support. Ms.

Lopez summarized the entire process in one phrase: “very isolated.” Encouraged and released On the other side, Ms. Jacobs received a lot of encouragement from her coach, which helped reduce the stress. As time progressed, Ms. Lopez was increasingly frustrated and disappointed. Her self-efficacy as an accomplished teacher declined gradually. In contrast, Ms. Jacob went through the NBC process being assured and easy as she knew that Ms. Emery, her coach is always in her back pocket. She said it is always lovely having her there. She is the best part, and she knows that her coach helps whenever she can. When Ms. Jacobs has any needs, Ms. Emery will help.

Distant versus Accessible Coaching Relationships

Perceptions of coaching roles.

As Ms. Swadener focuses on providing cognitive support, she kept herself distant from the teachers in her district. On the contrary, Ms. Perterson had close relationships with teachers because she believed that emotional support is what teachers needed during teachers’ professional development. As the two coaches’ definition of their role differs, they had different relationships with candidate teachers. While Ms. Swadener defined her role as a formal coordinator, Ms. Emery made an effort to meet individual teachers’ needs and maintaining informal interaction with the teachers. She tried to make herself available to teachers at any time.

We provide support by advocating for them with their administrators and provide financial support by negotiating for the program and negotiating with the district office. (Ms. Swadener, April)

I give them my phone number, and they text me. They can email me any time. We have face-to-face meetings individually and also as a group. When teachers want to meet individually, I will engage in private coaching conversations individually. (Ms. Emery, April)

As seen in the above statements, Ms. Swaderner had a distant and formal relationship with teachers as she perceived her role more as an administrator and an advocate. However, Ms. Emery made a personal relationship with teachers as she believed candidates teachers

need encouragement and cheerleading.

Teachers' cognitive coaching experiences.

Ms. Lopez felt that she was unable to connect with the facilitators on a personal level. Ms. Lopez described the relationship (climate) as “cold and distant.” In contrast, Ms. Jacobs had a personal relationship with her coach. The following statements illustrate two teachers' relationships with each of their coaches.

I asked my facilitator to look at the video, and she looked at the video (but) didn't comment much about it. She made sure, “well, you're not showing evidence.” I never really made any connections with facilitators except at the end, with one of them. (Ms. Lopez, March).

At any time I have a problem, I can text her or send an e-mail. She was always available. She was always there to give you feedback in the teacher support role. She is like a friend. (Ms. Jacobs, April)

The conversation with coaches led me to think that NBPTS is a process appropriate only for those who could prove themselves to be master teachers. As Ms. Lopez felt cold and distant from her coach, she felt the NBC process extraordinarily challenging and overwhelming to the point where she was tempted to drop out in the middle of the process. She felt as if she fell short of the high expectations from the coach. As she had much room for improvement, she felt intimidated to share her struggles with my facilitators. As the deadline was drawing near, she could not concentrate on her work. She stopped doing anything for weeks because she felt like withdrawing.

In contrast, Ms. Jacobs regarded Ms. Emery as a kind of a friend. Ms. Jacobs felt that her coach genuinely understands where she struggles and make herself available. Although Ms. Jacobs also had challenges during the NBC process, she knew help is at the reach of her hand all the time. The close relationship with Ms. Emery made Ms. Jacobs feels secure and effective during the NBC process.

Discussion

Until recently, only a few studies investigate how two coaches' perceptions of coaching roles may impact teachers' coaching experiences during teachers' professional development. The purpose of this study is to explore two coaches' different perceptions of coaching roles and teachers' cognitive coaching experiences during the National Board Certification process. This study contributes to the literature by uncovering how coaches' perceptions, beliefs, and personalities can influence teachers' coaching experiences with a comparative case study.

First, one of the significant findings from this study is that two coaches had different perceptions of coaching roles depending on their views on teachers' urgent needs during teachers' professional development. In line with Spillane's (2002) cognitive framework, the finding from this study shows that coaches defined their roles differently in terms of application of coaching, providing support, and relationships. For example, Ms. Swadener has given overwhelming attention to her role as a cognitive coach, whereas Ms. Emerery defined her role as an encourager and cheerleader. This study reveals that coaches' perception of their roles impacts coaching practices (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). Therefore, there is a need to set up clear expectations and descriptions of coaching roles. The findings from the current study indicated that future efforts need to be made to develop guidance and standards for coaches on best practices.

Second, it is noteworthy that despite the different applications of cognitive coaching principles, two teachers felt frustration and resistance towards cognitive coaching. Both teachers showed a strong desire for getting feedback and validations for their teaching practices from the coach. This finding is consistent with a study that teachers prefer more specific feedback and ideas from a cognitive coach than the cognitive coaching model provides (Bjerken, 2013). It may be that teachers are generally used to detailed expectations and modeling from their teacher preparation program and receiving direct answers. Therefore, coaches need the training to navigate teachers who desire specific feedback rather than going through an intense self-initiated learning process. Additionally, teachers need to learn how to deal with uncomfortable times of change to change teaching practices.

There has been a consensus that changes in teaching practices require teachers to realize

they need to make changes in instructional practices (Lee & Shin, 2009). In other words, teachers need to go through uncomfortable times of cognitive disequilibrium through critical self-reflection (Madrid et al., 2013). Thus, teachers may desire direct instructions, feedback from coaches during these uncomfortable moments of uncertainty and cognitive dissonance. There has been increasing awareness that it is necessary to understand teachers' resistance to instructional coaching (Jacobs, Boardman, Potvin, & Wang, 2018; Netolicky, 2016). Studies have demonstrated that when teachers felt resistant to coaching, they are more likely to be reluctant to changes and less cooperative in communication with coaches (Jacobs et al., 2018; Netolicky, 2016). Thus, we suggest future researchers investigate more systematic support both for coaches and teachers for promoting mutual understanding on the process of teachers' professional development (Baker, 2008).

Third, when a coach focuses on teachers' self-comprehension and autonomy without adequate emotional support, teachers could be stressed to sustain the process of self-improvement. In this study, Ms. Swadener in WUSD viewed NBC as a personal process that promotes self-reflection and autonomy. Ms. Swadener had a much stricter adherence to cognitive coaching tenets, demanding that teachers create their answers to their teaching questions. This strict application of the cognitive coaching principle led Ms. Lopez to feelings of isolation and frustration. This finding shows the importance of trust and empathy between the cognitive coach and the teacher. The relationship between coach and teacher is critical for effective coaching (Elek & Page, 2019 ; Rogers et al., 2016; Will et al., 2016). As such, the findings from this study call for coaches' sensitivity to consider teachers' needs and emotions. In this sense, coaches need to possess interpersonal skills beyond pedagogical expertise. A coach needs skills and the ability to provide timely support and feedback to promote teachers' sustained effort for their professional development.

Finally, it is noteworthy that instant gratification may not yield teachers' fundamental professional development as teachers need sufficient time to deal with cognitive dissonance and self-reflection. Ms. Emery played a much more flexible role, often encouraging teachers by providing advice regarding their pedagogical questions. Ms. Emery was responsive to teachers' emotional needs and made herself available. She also provided instant feedback to teachers who ask for validation of their teaching practices, consistent

with previous studies that mentors perceived their roles to provide feedback to teachers (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). However, coaches learned that fundamental teacher change happens when coaches step back and provide teachers a time and space for self-reflection and critical examination of their practice. In this sense, coaches need training for finding the balance between responding to the teachers' needs for validation and providing time for critical self-reflection.

There are limitations to the study. This study focuses only on two coaches' cognitive coaching at teacher support meetings for the school district and teachers' cognitive coaching experiences during the NBC process. This study did not specifically analyze interaction during the coaching conversations. Additionally, this study did not investigate how coaching conversation impacted teachers' level of reflection and their classroom interaction with children. Therefore, we suggest future researchers investigate how coaches' perception may impact the quality of coaching conversation, teachers' reflection, and teaching practices.

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