Facilitating Professional Development for Coaches through Cross-District Collaboration

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**The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
San Diego, CA April 22, 2022**

Brock University

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Canada

Agenda

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→ Conceptual Framework

→ Methodology

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→ Implications for Practice

Introduction

→ Coaches often receive little preparation for their complex roles (Gallucci et al., 2010).

→ Coaches' professional development should be ongoing, varied, and both formal and informal, such as collaborating with other coaches (Mraz et al. 2008; Kern et al., 2018).

→ Cross-district collaboration has the potential to expand educators' perspectives by removing silos, enhancing access to information and support, and promoting positive change amongst educational leaders and teachers (Kudson & Garibaldo, 2015).

→ Collegial support is more timely than ever as educators have been working in COVID-19 pandemic isolation, in remote online environments, and educating their students in the context of significant social justice issues (Burtch & Gordon, 2021).

Introduction

→ Little research has explored cross-district collaboration between coaches (Short et al., 2012; Ronan et al., 2018).

→ Klar, Hugging, Andreoli and Buskey (2020) profiled a three-year collaboration among school leaders focused on their own leadership coaching; they needed to be actively engaged in a collaborative professional learning community supporting their facilitation and coaching skills, but they also needed to participate in personalized learning experiences.

→ This complementary quality (collaborative yet also individualized) of cross-district professional learning for coaches, was a feature in our present study design.

Research Question

As educational researchers, we sought to document how coaches from different school districts can collaborate while learning professionally to enhance their practice.

Our research question was: What are the experiences of a Digital Learning Coach (DL) and STEM/Literacy Coach (STEM/L) as they engaged in PD with each other, facilitated by a researcher?
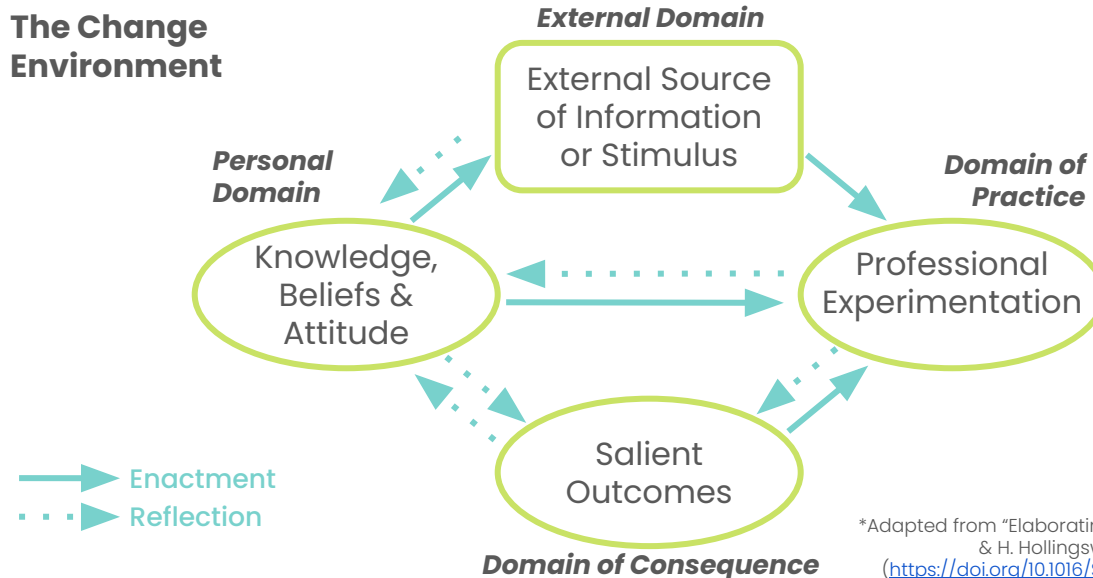
Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework

Social-constructivist research paradigm (Schwandt, 2003)

Interconnected Model of Teacher Professional Growth (IMTPG) (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) depicts growth as mediated by the processes of critical reflection and enactment on information from four domains: teachers' personal beliefs, sources of external information, salient outcomes, and classroom practices.

The Change Environment

External Domain

External Source of Information or Stimulus

Personal Domain

Knowledge, Beliefs & Attitude

Domain of Practice

Professional Experimentation

Salient Outcomes

→ Enactment
⋯▶ Reflection

Domain of Consequence

*Adapted from "Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth" by D. Clark & H. Hollingsworth, 2002, Teaching and Teacher Education, 18, p. 951 (https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(02)00053-7). Copyright © 2022 Elsevier B.V.

Conceptual Framework

As this study evolved, the coaches engaged with one of the researchers and it became apparent that there were social and interactive outcomes of the professional learning aligned with the Interconnected Interactive Model of Professional Growth (IIMPG; Ko, Hall & Goldman, 2022) which accounts for teachers' and researchers' interactions as integral to their co-construction of knowledge and professional growth.
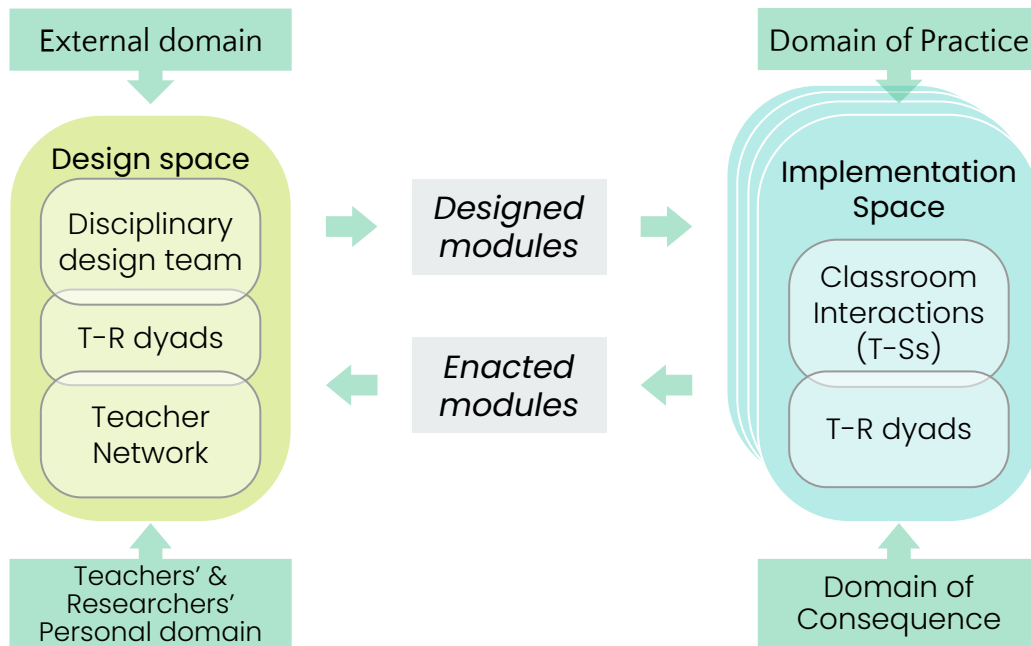
*Adapted from "Making teacher and researcher learning visible: Collaborative design as a context for professional growth" by M. Ko, A. Hall & S.R. Goldman, 2022, Cognition and Instruction, 40(1), p. 31. (https://doi.org/10.1080/07370008.2021.2010212).
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Methodology

Methodology

Two-year study used qualitative interpretive case study methods (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000). This was a unique case (Yin, 2009) that we were studying within a contemporary technology coaching setting.
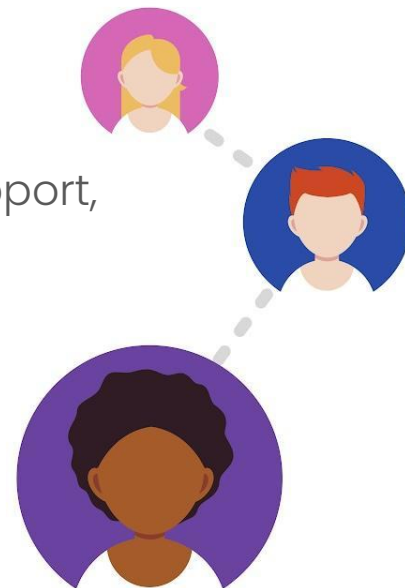
Participants: 2 coaches, from neighbouring, different Ontario school boards
→   Helen (DL Coach); 17 years teaching and 4 years as a coach
→   Jenna (STEM/L Coach); 25 years teaching and 10+ years as a coach

Researcher-facilitated meeting, during which the coaches built rapport, discussed their roles, and established plans for working together.

Jenna invited Helen to observe teacher PD sessions she facilitated.

Each coach then began an independent self-selected book study facilitated by the researcher including Jenna and her Professional Learning Team (Paige, Tammy) and Helen and her colleague (James).

Methodology

FIELDNOTES	
2018-2019	**2019-2020***

Dec 2018- Introductory Meeting
April 2019- Observation of Jenna's PD by Helen
	December 2019- Book Study[1]
	     Jenna, Paige, Tammy, Helen
	February 2020- Book Study[1]
	     Jenna, Paige, Tammy, Helen, James
	June 2020- Researcher Reflection/Summary of Book Study[1]

TRANSCRIPTS	
2018-2019	**2019-2020***
October 2018- Helen Interview **November 2018**- Researcher Reflection **December 2018**- Jenna Book Study[2] **December 2018**- Helen Book Study[3] **January 2019**- Jenna Book Study[2] **January 2019**- Helen Book Study[3] **February 2019**- Jenna Book Study[2] **June 2019**- Jenna Interview **June 2019**- Helen Interview	**September 2019**- Helen Interview **June 2020**- Jenna Interview **June 2020**- Helen Interview *2020 data collection was impacted by COVID-19 pandemic

[1]- *Launch* (Spence & Juliani, 2016)
[2]- *Stem to Story* (Traig, 2015)
[3]- *The Impact Cycle* (Knight, 2017)

Methodology

Meetings and interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, with transcriptions member-checked.

Data analyses involved using the qualitative software, NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2015)

13 nodes were created (coach challenges, collaboration, mentoring, motivation to learn, new approaches, professional development, professional knowledge, professional learning, relationships, sharing, support, teams, affirmation) through open-ended coding (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to create four themes that categorized the nodes (Johnson & Christensen, 2004); inductive analysis approach (Thomas, 2006) used to create themes and interpret as findings

Findings

Benefits of Cross-District Collaboration

Although their school districts were adjacent, there had never been opportunities for these coaches to collaborate; this needed to be formally coordinated by the researchers. Helen appreciated the opportunity to learn from the more experienced Jenna. For instance, Helen shadowed Jenna during teacher PD sessions that Jenna facilitated; this was an implicit modeling opportunity. During collaborative meetings, Jenna helped Helen problem solve potential implementation barriers within her district and shared networking contacts for resources. Both coaches acknowledged the benefits of their cross-district collaboration.

" *Jenna has such a wealth of knowledge and experience. She is very humble and [contributed to my] learning. To hear that she appreciated my ideas as well...We're not in the same board which is nice, and willingness to share. I thank you for that connection* **(Helen, Interview, Jan 2019)**

I find it all is helpful. You get a different view, vision as we talked about we are there to support other people, then we support one another. Being able to chat with you is good too. **(Jenna, Interview, June 2020)** "

Resourcing Coaching: Common Challenges

It was both comforting and frustrating for these coaches to discuss common challenges such as having the technology, financial, and time-related resources for effective coaching. They shared strategies for networking with industry partners and corporations. Budgeted funds to pay for teachers to be released from their classroom responsibilities to attend PD sessions were limited. They discussed how this operational challenge might be creatively overcome during a collaborative meeting in December 2019:

> **Jenna:** *I'm not given a budget*
> **Helen:** *So, it's just magical. If it's going to happen, it happens. Or if you ask if someone will lend you?*
> **Jenna:** *Last year we did intermediate literacy and technology*
> **Helen:** *They had a little bit of money?*
> **Jenna:** *We brought assessment into it because we wanted to focus on the assessment continuum, so it fell under me [role] and we got some money.*
> **Helen:** *So creative!*

Resourcing Coaching: Common Challenges

At this meeting, Helen was pleased to share with Jenna one of her first salient experiences making connections with industry partners, which was a vehicle to overcome the challenge of lack of resources:

> " *My first introduction to design thinking was actually through IBM. It was one of the Ministry of Education sponsored days. They had you go to the IBM Innovation Place in Toronto and spend a day there where they actually took us through a design thinking challenge. That's where you could see the connection to industry is just there in so many different ways...Those are the connections I mean.* **(Jenna, Transcript Collaborative Meeting, Dec, 2019)**. "

Career-Long Desire to Learn

Both coaches were life-long learners dedicated to continuing to enhance their practices. Both shared ways to support technology-hesitant and enrich technology-savvy teachers, demonstrating meaningful connections as they supported each other. The more experienced Jenna encouraged Helen to engage in long-term planning and team building and shared how her district built internal capacity for growth.

> *Jenna notes that it takes years to get the [professional learning and educator] team in place and the thinking behind creating a long-term plan. Jenna states that they only have teachers in the project that are all 'bought in.'...This was when the cross-coaching occurred. Jenna naturally takes on this role of mentor to Helen. Helen is in awe of their school board's resources and their cooperation as a consultant team.* **(Fieldnotes, Collaborative Meeting, April 2019)**

> *Tammy [another district technology coach] helps me a lot with coding...I felt like I could really empathize with people that were just learning. That is difficult to admit for teachers, and important for me to know...people want someone that they can go to. Even if you are the person to help them find the answer* **(Jenna, Transcript Collaborative Meeting, Dec 2019).**

Time: Building and Sustaining Cross-Collaboration

Similar to the need for dedicated time to build coach-teacher relationships, dedicated time is required to build coach-coach collegial relationships. Here, the provision of this dedicated time resulted in strong coach-coach relationships and a sustained commitment to cross-collaboration and professional learning. Interestingly, strong relationships here reinforced their value when coaching teachers; coaches experienced first-hand how it felt to have collegial support.

> *Jenna: The meeting with Helen was very helpful.*
> *Researcher: She [Helen] said in a text message, 'Oh I hope that Jenna...,I hope that I was able to give her at least one good idea! [laugh]*
> *Jenna: Oh! [laugh]*
> *Researcher: She saw you write something down and I don't know what it was.*
> *Jenna: [laugh] Ah and I think I shared something with her. I sent her a QR... You know what, it's not even whether I got something from her or not, it's [that] sometimes we need peers to be able to throw ideas around. (Jenna, Interview, Jan 2019).*

I learn so much from them. They are the inspiration for why I want us to be a good team.
(Helen, Interview June 2020)

Discussion

Discussion

→ The value of collaboration and collegial discussion cannot be underestimated (Perry & Boylan, 2017)

→ This study found that DL and STEM/L coaches benefited from attention to their own learning provided by an educational researcher and collaborations with each other.

→ Coaches and other professional learning facilitators state that they rarely have such opportunities to connect with their peers - ironically, they are supporting teachers to collaborate with their teacher colleagues/peers.

→ Dedicated engagement with professional resources such as a professional learning book that targets topics that the coaches in turn used with the teachers that they supported, could be regarded as 'retooling' (Sachs, 2011, as cited in Perry & Boylan, 2017)

Discussion

→ Interconnected Interactive Model of Professional Growth (IIMPG) (Ko et al., 2022) identifies the cross-district collaborations as integral to the discursive context that the coaches engaged in as they shared their resources and their challenges and suggests that the participants' (and the researcher's) distinct beliefs, experience and knowledge are agentive to their shared reflection and learning.

→ Cross-collaborative relationships were built and the participants engaged within the external domain with new professional resources (i.e., book study) that they identified as supportive for their own learning.

Implications for Practice

→ We offer a PD project design where both the challenges and emotions related to the role of coaching were addressed and supported (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013).

→ When coaches work with faculty researchers, the researcher's role is to support coaches as they support teachers (Blachowicz et al., 2010; Perry & Boylan, 2017)

→ In this sense, the coaches have a "'doubling of identity' in which they were being educated and educating others simultaneously" (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013, p. 70).

→ We have offered fodder for educators, facilitators and researchers to deepen their own professional learning and that of the teachers they may support

Questions? Contact Us

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