

**'Trust the process': New teacher
experiences of instructional
coaching as an element of their
teacher training in England**

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of Doctor of Education**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to better understand new teacher experiences of instructional coaching as an element of their teacher training in England. The research questions examined teacher experience on three levels: in relation to their developing professional identity and agency; in relation to their relationship with their coach; and in relation to their understanding of the educational policy and context in which the coaching took place. This thesis argues that instructional coaching has proliferated in a performative culture, through complex policy technologies. I argue that without better understanding of the teacher experience, the teacher's role in the process will be based on assumptions, which may serve the needs of those in power above the needs of the teacher.

A qualitative methodology was used. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 new teachers who had been prescribed to receive similar versions of instructional coaching as part of their teacher training in England. The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings highlighted that the teacher experience of instructional coaching is complex and diverse. Their experiences were affected by gender, subject specialisms and whether they had changed careers to join teaching. Teachers feeling a 'vibe' with their coaches was important to their experience and suggests a need for more thoughtful pairing of teachers and coaches. The teachers who experienced coaching as part of whole school coaching practice were more likely to positively engage with the coaching as prescribed. Despite holding views about wider educational policy surrounding instructional coaching, teachers' experiences were most heavily influenced by their relationship with their coach and their immediate context.

For my mum, Professor Janet Tod, and her mum before her, who instilled in me the importance of learning.

And for my dad, Peter Tod, who encouraged me to stay on the water until I had crossed the finish line.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Company
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CCF	Core Content Framework
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
ECF	Early Career Framework
ECT	Early Career Teacher
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GSE	Graduate School of Education
IfT	Institute for Teaching
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
ITTECF	Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework
LDO	Leadership Development Officer
LDP	Leadership Development Programme
NPQ	National Professional Qualification
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PD	Professional Development
PDL	Professional Development Lead
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SAT	Standard Assessment Test
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
TA	Thematic Analysis
TDT	Teacher Development Trust
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Motivation for the Study

In 2016, I attended the Teacher Squared conference at Relay Graduate School of Education in New York to learn about their methods for coaching teachers. An interaction between two of the Relay teacher educators who were presenting served as an early catalyst for this study.

During a presentation, one of the teacher educators (Laura) stopped the other (Helen) to give 'live' feedback, while Helen was presenting. Seamlessly, Helen took the feedback and corrected her delivery in line with what was requested by Laura. This interaction, in front of the attendees, was undeniably an impressive showcase of the coaching processes (a cycle of observation, feedback, modelling and practice) developed by Relay. The language and scripted sentence starters for introducing the feedback were used by Laura, and Helen responded in a model way. There appeared to be such a relationship between them, sitting within the specific context of a graduate school in New York, which meant that Helen could be critiqued by Laura, in front of a room of strangers, and not flinch. Helen appeared to be able to remove herself completely from her practice so it could be corrected.

What I observed was the feedback and practice elements of a form of instructional coaching. The role of Laura, as coach, was clear in this interaction. I was at the conference to learn how to coach more like Laura. But it made me question the role of Helen, the one who was corrected, and the influence of the context in which that interaction sat, including Helen's relationship with Laura. As Laura's role was made explicit, I realised that to better understand the coaching interaction between those two people, I needed to ask Helen, as opposed to Laura, how she experienced it. Helen was both the object and the subject of the coaching interaction, and it was that initial paradox that led me to this study which aims to better understand the experience of the teacher in the instructional coaching process.

Undoubtedly, Laura and Helen were well-practised in this routine. The interaction that I observed occurred between two experienced teacher trainers in the United States (US), but this study's focus is coaching between new teachers and their coaches as part of their teacher training in England. Helen and Laura's instructional coaching interaction sat in a completely different context from where instructional coaching is now, in English teacher training.

The teacher experience of instructional coaching in England has not been researched and presents a gap in the literature. This thesis' original contribution to the existing research will be to provide a nuanced and detailed examination of the teacher experience and, in researching their experience,

highlight the importance of the teacher experience to the development of instructional coaching as a teacher training tool.

I am well positioned to study teacher experiences of instructional coaching. For the past 20 years, I have practised various forms of coaching in English schools; I have worked one-to-one with teachers with the aim of improving their practice. The reason to improve their practice has been diverse and been predominantly determined by the school or organisational context in which I was working. I have been employed to coach teachers to retain them in a school or on a teacher training scheme; to increase their well-being; as part of formalised competency procedures; as a part of their teacher training; or to improve their basic teaching skills to the point that they are 'safe' in a classroom. I have coached using my own, more facilitative, methods and I have coached using scripted instructional coaching materials from a training provider. Some of the key proponents of instructional coaching in England are my peers from my own teacher training route. I have helped to develop instructional coaching materials for others but, more recently, as a senior leader in schools, I have resisted implementing whole school instructional coaching.

I have thrived in teaching in a performative culture. In 2014, Michael Gove, then the Secretary of State for Education, said that I was "representative, emblematic, of the idealistic and supremely talented young people who are entering teaching now."¹ I recognise that I could be seen as one of the "ontological insecure" (Ball, 2003, p.220) teachers that Ball writes about; I was driven by performance and recognition. I was part of a complex policy technology which heralded teachers and their agency, alongside tightening controls over their outputs. The movement of power from policymaker to teacher, as discussed by Ball (2003), forms the basis for my theoretical framework, which is discussed from page 16. I have become critical of the technicalisation of teacher training and how a drive for uniformity has potentially marginalised the teacher experience (Ball, 2013b, p.47). The better I understand my position, the better I can understand my biases and my influence as a researcher on data collection and analysis, discussed in detail in chapter 3.

A biproduct of this study is that it will provide me with the tools and the opportunity to more closely question my place in the development of instructional coaching in a performative culture. A primary product will be the development of instructional coaching as a teacher training method.

Defining Terms Instructional Coaching

¹ Michael Gove spoke about me in the House of Commons in 2014 directly following a meeting we had to discuss how Key Stage 3 English teachers would be trained to ensure student progression from the Key Stage 2 grammar, punctuation and spelling tests. The new tests were introduced in 2013, and I wrote to my local MP about my concerns that English teachers were not adequately trained to teach English grammar. My local MP organised the meeting with Micheal Gove and, following the meeting, I was invited to be a Teacher in Residence at the Department for Education. It is maybe worth noting that I was not placed in the English curriculum development department.

Evaluations of instructional coaching encouraged caution when considering a large scale 'roll out' of coaching, such as we have seen across English teacher training curriculums (Kraft and Blazer, 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Daly et al., 2023; Sims, 2019). The main reason for this caution was the time needed for the recruitment and training of effective coaches. Kraft et al. (2018) summarise:

It may be that coaching is best utilized as a targeted program with a small corps of expert coaches working with willing participants and committed schools rather than as a district-wide PD [professional development] program (p. 574).

The development of instructional coaching as a teacher training tool in England is discussed in detail in chapter 2 (page 31). In summary, the introduction of instructional coaching across teacher training curriculums may have been accelerated by the Covid pandemic which forced an 'early roll out' of the ECF in 2020 and then its introduction across the country in 2021 (Education Endowment Foundation, 2023). The ECF (Department for Education, 2019a) was a two-year teacher induction after a trainee teacher's one year ITT, and replaced the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year. The ECF was in response to the Department for Education's (2019b) 'Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy', addressing the challenge of new teachers not getting enough support and leaving the profession. Though instructional coaching was not mandated as a teacher training tool by government policy, I argue in chapter 2 that instructional coaching could be seen to be supported by policy papers prior to 2020 and 'Lead Providers' of the ECF and ITT providers built instructional coaching into their curriculums (for example, Ambitions Institute, 2024; Teach First, 2020).

In chapter 2, I track instructional coaching's rise in English teacher professional development, through complex policy technologies and a web of policy actors. The movement from US practice to English practice is a key part of instructional coaching's history. It started as a practice used to bring theory around literacy teaching into practice on a small scale in the US in the 1980s (Joyce and Showers, 1980, 1981, 1982). Since 2021, it has been a core element of teacher training curriculums in England (see, for example, Ambitions Institute, 2024; Teach First, 2020). The term 'instructional coaching' is now widespread in English primary and secondary teacher development literature and practice. There are teacher and leader-facing publications (Sherrington and Caviglioli, 2020); there are online systems for tracking coaching progress (Steplab, 2025a) and using video footage in coaching (iRIS Connect, 2025); and organisations are delivering courses and awarding qualifications in instructional coaching (The National College, 2025; Key Note Educational, 2025; Ambition Institute, 2025; Steplab, 2025b).

Given the changing definition and practice of instructional coaching from its origins in the US, this thesis uses a working definition of instructional coaching. I have taken the definition from Steplab

(2025a) – a “professional development platform” which allows teachers and coaches to track their progress through the instructional coaching process. At the time of data collection for this thesis, Steplab (2024) defined instructional coaching as a practice which:

Involves one teacher working with another teacher, to help them take small, personalised steps to improve their practice. Instructional coaches help their teachers to get better by doing two things on a regular basis:

1. Identifying an area for improvement, usually based on a short observation.
2. Providing teachers with opportunities to rehearse, get feedback, and make a habit of their improvement.

Steplab (2024) summarised the instructional process in a graphic (Figure 1) showing a process of observation, identification, praise, modelling and rehearsal.

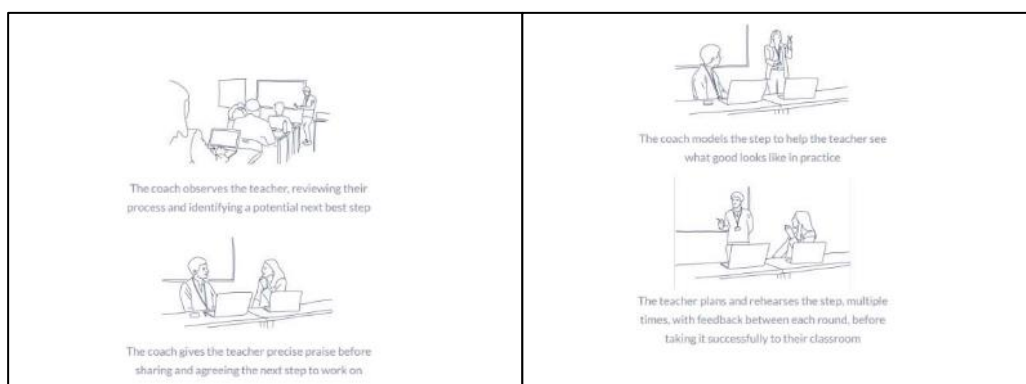


Figure 1: Summary of Instructional Coaching Process (StepLab 2024)

Instructional coaching in teacher training is predominantly delivered by the in-school mentor. The key difference between instructional coaching, and the more traditional observation and feedback models, is the identification of a “granular” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2016, p.26) next step, which sits as part of numerous cumulative changes to improve teacher practice in a particular area. Instructional coaching also involves the use of modelling of the next step by the coach and teacher rehearsal of the next step outside of the classroom. This rehearsal aims to consolidate the teacher’s application of the next step in their practice before they apply it ‘live’ in the classroom.

The StepLab definition of instructional coaching is used in the thesis as it provides a definition, and an illustration, that participants in the study will be familiar with. This shared definition ensures a shared definition of instructional coaching for the researcher and the participant (see Chapter 3). StepLab has played an important part in the rise of instructional coaching in English teacher training. Its creator, Josh Goodrich, is a Teach First ambassador, like me, and could be seen as one of the “Trojan army of mini neo-liberalists” (Elliott, 2018, p.272) or, given the financial success of StepLab and its influence on the development of teacher training methods, a “policy entrepreneur” (Ellis &

Childs, 2024, p.14). In chapter 2, I use Harry Fletcher Wood (who now also works within StepLab) as an example of a “new kind of teacher subject” (Ball, 2003, p.217) who heralded instructional coaching as a transformational method in teacher training. So, in using StepLab’s definition, I am not presenting a definition of what I believe instructional coaching *should* be. Rather, I use it to boundary the meaning of a complex term to better understand new teachers’ experiences of instructional coaching in England as it is articulated through their training.

Since I began work on this thesis, the language used by some key proponents of instructional coaching in England, including StepLab, has shifted. What was “instructional” coaching at Steplab (2024) is now “responsive” coaching (Goodrich, 2024) and Teaching WalkThrus (2025) (who “break teaching techniques down into five clear steps” so they can be shared and practiced by teachers) have moved from “instructional coaching” (Sherrington and Caviglioli, 2020) to “meaningful coaching” (Stone et al., 2025). Articles have emerged by education influencers over the past two years, providing critique of instructional coaching (Didau, 2025; Evidence Based Education, 2023; Quigley, 2023). The movement away from the word ‘instructional’ by these writers and companies could suggest a rising interest (in the popular, teacher-facing literature) in the adaptation of the coaching to suit the needs of the individual teacher. With the term ‘instructional coaching’ slowly exiting the English educationalists’ vernacular, it is a pivotal time for this research to highlight the importance of the teacher experience and come to some conclusions about what influences their experience and engagement with the coaching.

Teacher Training and Teacher Education

In 2024, there was a change in England to a Labour government, though the new governments has brought no major changes with regards teacher training. The Conservative government published a review of teacher training at the start of 2024 (Department for Education, 2024a). The current Labour government is upholding the recommendations from that review and combining Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) and the Early Career Framework (ECF) into a single ITTECF from September 2025 (Department for Education, 2025). This combined framework will further consolidate the “golden thread” (Department for Education, 2022, p.5) of teacher development from teacher training to trust leadership.

In England, there is a distinction between Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE). ITT in England refers to the statutory training requirements for teachers, regulated by the government. This has, in the past, referred to the more ‘practical’ elements of a teacher’s training, for example, what they, their placement schools, their university accreditors and their mentors need to do for the teacher to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). ITE has been associated with the

academic and reflective side of teacher training, provided by a university ITE provider, and the award of academic qualifications; ITE was the wider curriculum – the wider education of the new teacher - of which ITT was a compulsory and regulated part (Glazzard and Tate, 2025).

However, in recent years, ITT has become more prescribed by the government, notably with the introduction of the ITT CCF and the ECF in 2019 (Mutton & Burn, 2024; Peiser, Duncalf & Mallaburn, 2019). These ‘frameworks’ are provided by the government and are separated into ‘learn that’ and ‘learn how’ statements, showing clearly ITT’s coverage of both theory and the practice elements. The frameworks include references to educational research, which support the statements. However, the narrow and arguably selective research base for the frameworks has received criticism from educational researchers (Hordern and Brooks, 2023).

ITT in England is currently less of a part of ITE courses, and more of a driving force for ITE curriculums. This ensures that, to be accredited, ITE providers include the content and teaching techniques stipulated by the government. Because of the tighter controls on ITT and therefore ITE, Ellis and Child (2024) state that “England now has the most tightly regulated and centrally controlled system of ITE anywhere in the world” (p.2) and they describe the changes to ITE, notably the pushing out of universities from ITE, as “extraordinary” (p.16).

Glazzard and Tate (2025) argue that:

“The regulation of the ITE curriculum, through the ITTECF and the accreditation process, reflects a policy discourse that privileges ‘oven-ready’ teachers who can implement specific pedagogical approaches, which are supported by government-endorsed research.” (p.408)

This thesis focuses on instructional coaching as an element of a new teacher’s *training* in England. I explore instructional coaching as a compulsory element of ITT, as opposed to a part of a teacher’s wider ITE decided by providers and accreditors. I track the rise of instructional coaching as an established practice in teacher training, supported by developments in English ITT (Chapter 2). In using the term ‘teacher training’, I encompass the three years of training from ITT to ECT, which I refer to as a ‘new teacher’. I argue that this rise of instructional coaching sits at the heart of a debate around the dominance of ITT in ITE and the dominance of school and practice-led, as opposed to university and theory-led, ITE in England (see Chapter 2). This thesis explores instructional coaching as an element of English teacher training and, in doing so, contributes new knowledge to the wider field of teacher education. Ironically, despite increasing controls over content and delivery, the 2024 review (Department for Education, 2024a) suggested a need for greater individualisation of teacher training, seen through the repeated use of the word “tailor”. The review outlined the need for more

“tailored delivery” (p.4); a “need for greater tailoring” (p.5); and stated that “mentors will play a vital role in supporting tailoring in their schools” (p.6). “Diagnostic tools” will be used to identify what “tailoring” is needed (p.4). Mentor training time is being reduced from two years to one year, but the detail of the training resources is to be increased. ‘Lead providers’ are responsible for developing the training resources for mentors. These changes suggest an increase in the control over mentoring by the lead training providers and, in turn, the government. It also shows a continued focus on the mentor as the leader of the teacher training experience. The review suggests the need for more focus on, and adaptation for, the individual teacher, notably through the role of the mentor. It is a particularly important time to question the teacher’s experience in teacher training, especially how they experience the time spent with their mentor.

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching and mentoring are contested terms and so it is important to be clear on how they are used in this thesis. The literature on mentoring and coaching is extensive, making the terms multifarious and commonly used in business and education (Connor, 2017; Garvey and Stokes, 2021; Oberholzer and Boyle, 2023; Whitmore, J. and Gaskell, T., 2024). Mentoring is an ancient form of teaching originating in the relationship between the characters of Mentor and Odysseus in Homer’s *The Odyssey* (Homer, 2003). In the teacher training and education literature, mentoring, in its traditional form, is one to one, between a more experienced or expert person and a less experienced and more novice person (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2000; Clark and Byrnes 2012; Lofthouse, 2018; Daly et al., 2023). The mentoring process allows knowledge and skills to be passed from one person to another, with the aim of creating independent learners and practitioners (Hobson et al., 2009; Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Fletcher & Mullan, 2012; Clutterbuck, 2014). Though the relationship is asymmetrical, Little (1990) describes it as “profoundly personal and mutually respectful” (p.298). The relationship can be long term, finishing only when independence is reached. The mentor can hold multiple roles in the relationship. For example, that of “teacher, sponsor, role model, confidant” (p.298-9), meaning that the mentor is responsible for “nurturing, advising, befriending and instructing” (Fletcher & Mullan, 2012, p.10) the teacher. However, the traditional aims of mentoring can be confined and disrupted when placed in the context of teacher training. As defined above, in this thesis, teacher training refers to mandatory expectations placed upon a teacher and their mentor. When mentoring is “mandated” and “required” (p.11), as it is in English teacher training, it becomes “influenced by more managerial imperatives” (Hobson & Malderez, 2013, p.92). In this thesis, mentoring and the mentor refers to the required support given to the trainee teacher in England.

In relation to mentoring, coaching is more recent phenomenon (Fletcher & Mullan). In chapter 2, I track the rise of coaching in teacher training over the last 15 years. Coaching can be seen as a form of “technical mentoring” (p.9) with coaching focused on refining a particular element of teaching, potentially removing the more pastoral elements present in traditional mentoring. Coach can be one of the roles that the adaptable mentor adopts. However, instructional coaching, in this thesis, is treated as a separate phenomenon from mentoring. On certain teacher training programmes, the mentor has responsibility for coaching the teacher, and so, at times, the teacher’s mentor is the teacher’s instructional coach but that does not mean the two terms can be conflated. I argue that the teacher’s experience of receiving instructional coaching, specifically from their ITT or ECT mentor, is important to understand; instructional coaching sits within a wider context of policy intervention into mentoring and control of the mentoring relationship and, as Little argues, mentoring “does not lend itself well to policy intervention” (Little, 1990, p.299).

Policy, Policy Enactment and Policy Actors

In this thesis, I use the term ‘policy’ to refer to the formal mandates and directives provided by government and school and trust leaders that prescribe new teacher’s actions. In the thesis title, the use of ‘training’, and ‘instructional coaching’ as a prescribed element of a teacher’s training, highlights the focus on the importance of understanding a teacher’s experience of enacting policy directives.

‘Policy enactment’ is the complex process by which education policy moves from central government to schools; enactment is influenced by context and the various roles of ‘policy actors’ (Braun et al., 2010; Ball et al., 2011). Even in situations “where schools are located in the same areas, where they follow the same curriculum and where they employ similarly trained teachers” Maguire et al., 2019, p.489) policy will not be enacted in the same ways.

Teachers are part of a complex network of policy actors who “respond to, manage, interpret and balance a constant stream of policies” (Braun et al., 2010, p.548). They are part of the interpretation of policy, not just the simple implementation. I argue that teachers are not passive recipients of spolicy, they interact with it, and so better understanding their experience is key to better understanding how policy is enacted in schools.

Though I argue that new teachers (ITTs and ECTs) have an active role in policy enactment, I predominantly refer to ‘policy actors’ in this thesis as those who mediate consciously or

unconsciously between policy creators, such as central government, and the trainee teachers. They guide the new teacher’s interpretation of policy. In Ball et al’s (2011) typology of policy actor roles, I focus on “entrepreneurs” (p.628), those who champion or a drive a policy. I focus on these policy actors to exemplify the way power, in the form of policy directives, travel towards and interacts with, the experience of the new teacher.

Key Conflicts in the Teacher Experience of Instructional Coaching and Theoretical Framework

In defining my terms in the previous section, I have introduced the conflicts around successive government efforts to achieve closer policy control over teacher training and how this has marginalised university-led teacher education. The closer control over ITT and ECT provision in England in turn means closer control over mentoring, which makes effective mentoring “problematic in the extant policy landscape” (Murtagh & Dawes, 2021, p.33). Mentoring is further problematised when coaching is added as a role within that role. The introduction of instructional coaching into teacher training and the lack of research into teacher experience of this introduction highlights the importance to better understanding the new teacher’s place in this policy enactment. The introduction of instructional coaching appears to be surrounded by conflicts at policy, practice and research levels.

This research study was motivated by an observed conflict in practice as described in the opening to this chapter. The initial reason for my focus on the teacher experience of instructional coaching was how coaching relationships could be simultaneously hierarchical, directed and required by policy, and predicated by trust. Knight, a key figure in defining instructional coaching for teachers in England (Knight & van Nieuwerburgh, 2012), argues that trust is the foundation of instructional coaching (Knight, 2007). Trust suggests a reciprocity that conflicts with the need for coaching to be a mandatory part of a teacher’s training and a mentor’s role. This conflict is the foundation on which I have identified two further conflicts in the teacher experience of instructional coaching; these conflicts have informed my research questions (summarised in Table 1).

Relations on three levels (Bryk and Schneider, 2002)	Conflicts	Key Subjects in the Literature	Research Questions
Intrapersonal	Coaching requires individual compliance and agency	Teacher professional identity Teacher agency	How do new teachers experience agency and professional identity development in instructional coaching?
Interpersonal	Coaching relationships are	Teacher collegial relations	How do new teachers experience the

	trusting and hierarchical	Teacher mentoring	relationship with their instructional coach?
Organisational	Coaching processes are universal and individual	Teachers and policy reform Hierarchies and heterarchies	How do new teachers experience the instructional coaching process , in the context of local and national teacher training reforms?

Table 1: Key Conflicts and Research Questions

Though the table, for neatness, represents these conflicts as separate, the conflicts are interlinked and evolving from my initial identified conflict around the place of trust in instructional coaching. Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) work focuses on specifically on the importance of trust in schools and they provide three interlinked levels of trust which underpin the three conflicts and research questions summarised below.

On the organisation level, my theoretical framework is influenced by Foucault’s ideas on technologies of the self, the expert gaze and the Panopticon (Foucault, 1973, 1988). I also draw on Ball’s applications of Foucault to power enactment in educational policy reform in England (Ball, 2013a, 2013b, 2019; Chiang et al., 2024). Foucault provides ideas through which to question the assumptions, made by policy makers and educational leaders, about teachers in a performative culture. I argue that the practice of instructional coaching rests on those assumptions and, because the experience of teachers in the process presents a gap in the literature, their role in the coaching continues to be assumed. My proposed assumptions, made by policy makers and educational leaders, are that teachers are passive subjects; their practice is a problem; and they require continuous observation. The links between Foucault’s ideas and the assumptions about teachers can be seen in Table 2:

Foucault’s Idea	Assumption about Teachers
Technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988)	Teachers are passive subjects.
The clinic and the expert “gaze” (Foucault, 1973)	Teachers’ practice is a problem.
The Panopticon (Foucault, 1991)	Teachers require continuous observation.

Table 2: Foucault Ideas Informing Assumptions about Teachers

I argue that instructional coaching exists in a performative culture in which teachers are encouraged to perform the “normal” (Perryman, 2006, p.159). This culture has allowed instructional coaching to proliferate as a teacher training tool, despite the lack of understanding of the teacher experience, and in contradiction to research warning against its widespread ‘roll out’.

I propose that the assumptions made about teachers problematise and obfuscate the teacher's role in the instructional coaching process. A process which, according to teacher professional development literature, requires trust (Nieuwerburgh and Passmore, 2012), agency (Clarke, 2009) and reciprocity (Knight, 2019). There is an incongruity between the assumptions made about teachers, based on Foucault's ideas of how power is disseminated; the literature around best practice in coaching and teacher development; and my experience. This incongruity led me to propose the key conflicts, three levels of experience and research questions outlined in Table 1.

Alongside the ideas of Foucault and Ball, I draw on literature related to the new teacher and their training to better understand the current research base relating to the conflicts identified. The literature emphasises the complexity of the influences on a new teacher's experience of their training and therefore the need to better understand their experiences.

On the interpersonal level, I draw further on Bryk and Schneider's (2002) theories around trust in schools to examine the new teacher's seemingly hierarchical relationship with their coach. Despite the coaching literature universally agreeing that trust is needed in a coaching relationship, the literature on trust made me question the need for it in instructional coaching.

On the intrapersonal level, understanding the individual teacher and their professional identity development is crucial to successful training (McNally et al., 2008). However, the need to better understand the individual is often usurped by the need to measure their performance (Wilkins et al., 2011; Fox, 2020; Sachs, 2001; Reeves, 2018; Clarke, 2009). The focus on performance is exemplified by mentor meeting time being used for instructional coaching in English teacher training curriculums, thus potentially removing time for more pastoral support. The literature highlights that there are constraints on better understanding the individual teacher in a performative culture.

Research Questions

As stated above, the three levels of trust: "intrapersonal, interpersonal and organisational" (p.22) helped to refine my three research questions – on the level of individual professional identity, relationship with the coach and relationship with policy.

The first conflict is how instructional coaching can require both agency and compliance from the new teacher. This conflict led to the question: *How do new teachers experience agency and professional identity development in instructional coaching?* Teacher professional identity development and teacher agency are both key to new teacher professional development,

particularly when they enter teaching. But the role of teacher as novice in the instructional coaching process could be seen to inhibit the development of teacher agency and mould their burgeoning identity towards compliance, rather than criticality (Sachs, 2001; Fox, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2020).

The second conflict is how a teacher's relationship with their coach can be both trusting and hierarchical. This conflict led to the question: *How do new teachers experience the relationship with their instructional coach?* The role of the instructional coach, usually played by their in-school mentor, is not purely developmental. The coach, when acting as the mentor, plays a part in providing evidence for their assessment as teachers. The instructional coaching, and the monitoring of that coaching, is also a compulsory part of their teacher training curriculum and so I question the role of trust in the contrived, hierarchical relationship between teacher and coach.

The third conflict is how instructional coaching can meet the professional practice needs of the individual and the policy need to provide a universal process across trainee teachers. This conflict led to the question: *How do new teachers experience the instructional coaching process, in the context of local and national teacher training reforms?* As stated above, key studies warned against the 'roll out' of instructional coaching (Kraft et al., 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Daly et al., 2023; Sims, 2019) and yet this is what happened across primary and secondary teacher training curriculums in England (see for example, Ambitions Institute, 2024; Teach First, 2020). Potentially the need to universalise processes, as part of the 'golden thread' of teacher development in a performative culture, has overridden the focus on the individual new teacher.

New teachers in this study are defined as those in their first three years of teaching and still in training; either in their first year of teacher training (their ITT year) or in their second or third year of teacher training (their Early Career Teacher (ECT) years). New teachers are of particular interest because they are "furthest away from the centre of decision-making, from the power of the state" (Foucault, 2020, p.73) and this may explain why their experiences of instructional coaching in English teacher training present a gap in the literature.

This study addresses the under-researched role of the new teacher in the instructional coaching process. It seeks to understand more about the teacher's role by better understanding their experience - what influences their experience and therefore their engagement with the instructional coaching. It addresses a gap in the literature: the lack of research into the new teacher experience of instructional coaching in England, despite its widespread inclusion in teacher training curriculums since 2020.

In 2025, under new emerging labels for instructional coaching, and under a refined policy focus on 'tailoring' for the new teacher, better understanding of the teacher experience of coaching in England is crucial as it will provide an insight into the factors that influence new teacher engagement with their development. My study questions why teacher experience is absent from the literature on instructional coaching and address that the gap in the literature, whilst also adding to the body of knowledge surrounding instructional coaching as a teacher training tool.

Methodological Overview

This study is informed by a social constructionist view of the social world and an interpretivist view of what can be known from educational research. I align with Pring (2009) who states that there are "social facts" in the world, and this allows for "tentative" generalisations to be drawn between individual experiences (p.118-119). I wish to better understand the social facts surrounding instructional coaching by drawing generalisations across individual teachers' experiences. But also, by seeing the value in the individual experience and how this contributes to the construction of instructional coaching as a phenomenon. I argue that instructional coaching is a social phenomenon and so it is "produced through social interaction" and "in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2008, p.13). I argue that instructional coaching is better understood through the eyes of the teachers who experienced the coaching.

Crotty (1998) states that "we are born into a world of meaning" (p.54) and so I align with a social constructionist view: instructional coaching is not just constructed by the teachers in that coaching but by the social context in which the interaction exists. The social contexts are complex (Hoskins, 2020) and, in focusing on the individual in the coaching process, I wish to highlight that complexity, whilst also making tentative generalisations across cases to inform future instructional coaching practice.

I also take an interpretivist ontological view in that I seek to understand human behaviour as opposed to explain it (Bryman, 2008). I aim to gain that understanding through speaking to the teachers involved in the coaching. In chapter 3, I acknowledge the criticisms of this approach, including that I cannot seek to understand the teachers' emotions through speaking to them as the language they use can "play tricks" (Denzin, 1991, p.68).

My philosophical assumptions support taking a qualitative approach to this research. My aim is to better understand the individual teacher experience in instructional coaching and so I use semi-

structured interviews as my sole research method. Interviews are a social interaction, which means that both the teacher and me, as the researcher, bring our “baggage” to the interview (Cohen et al., 2007, p.150). Pilot interviews; refinement and reduction of interview questions; and the use of a diagram to gain a shared definition of “instructional coaching”, will help to reduce the variation of my role between interviews. However, I cannot fully remove myself from the research process and so I acknowledge my positionality and biases throughout the data collection and analysis process.

I will use “inductive” and “semantic” thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp.83-4). In line with my philosophical approach, I do not wish to explain the teachers’ experiences, I wish to better understand their experiences, and highlight the complexity and importance of their experiences. Through data analysis, I also wish to better understand the contextual factors which influence their experiences.

Overview of Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Following on from this introduction, in chapter 2, I present my theoretical framework in my literature review, which informs my argument that instructional coaching exists in a performative culture in which the teacher experience has been marginalised and based on assumptions by policy makers and educational leaders. Through this framework, I track how the history of the development of instructional coaching in England has reinforced assumptions about teachers as passive subjects, whose practice needs constant observation to ‘fix’ it. I then present three potential conflicts in the teacher experience of instructional coaching. Linked to these conflicts, I explore teacher experience on three levels. I appeal to the literature on teacher professional identity and agency; teacher collegial relationships and mentoring; and teachers’ relationship with policy reform and school context. Looking at instructional coaching experience on three levels, leads me to my three key research questions.

In chapter 3, I explain how I will address my research questions through my methodological choices. I explain my philosophical assumptions which underpin my qualitative methodology and inform my data collection and analysis methods. I explore my positionality in the research and how this affects my ethical considerations, including my biases. For clarity, in chapter 3, I will refer to the teachers in the study as ‘participants’ and ‘teachers’. From chapter 4 onwards, I will refer to them just as ‘teachers’.

In chapters 4-6, I present my data analysis. Each chapter will address one of my three research questions and address the key conflict in the teacher experience linked to that question.

In chapter 7, I present a synthesis of my key findings and how they address the research questions. I make clear my original contribution to research and reflect on the limitations of the study. I propose recommendations for practice and future research before providing my final thoughts on the study.

The terms 'mentor' and 'coach' are used repeatedly throughout this thesis. As the in-school mentor provides the instructional coaching (and is therefore both 'mentor' and 'coach' to the new teacher) it is important to clarify how I use these terms. I use the term 'mentor' when discussing the literature relating to new teacher mentoring and to label the statutory in-school support role provided for a new teacher. I use the term 'coach' when discussing the literature relating to coaching and to label the person who provided the instructional coaching to the new teachers in the study. Therefore, the in-school mentor will be referred to predominantly as the coach.

Ball (2013b), in his application of Foucault's ideas to education, wrote:

In regimes of performativity, experience is nothing, productivity is everything [...] we adapt ourselves to the challenges of reporting and recording our practice, interpersonal social structures and social relations are replaced by informational structures (pp.136-8).

In focusing on the conflicts, complexities and opacities associated with the teacher experience of instructional coaching in this thesis, I aim to highlight the importance of better understanding their role in the process so that the drive for productivity does not marginalise the individual experience.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The first two sections of this chapter help me to conceptually frame my overarching research question: *How do new teachers experience instructional coaching as an element of their teacher training in England?* I provide an understanding of how instructional coaching has become an element of some new teachers' training in England (Daly et al., 2023), and the social and political context from which it grew.

In the first section, entitled 'Performativity, Foucault and Three Assumptions About the Teacher in Instructional Coaching', I provide a reminder of this study's working definition of instructional coaching. I then use a selection of Foucault's (1973, 1988) ideas, and Ball's (Ball, 2013a, 2013b, 2019, Chiang et al., 2024) interpretations of Foucault in relation to English education, to propose three assumptions made about teachers by policy makers and educational leaders. I argue that these assumptions inform the ideology of teacher development on which instructional coaching policy is based.

In the second section, entitled 'The Development of Instructional Coaching in English Educational Policy', I exemplify these assumptions as I review a selection of policy and research literature relating to the development of instructional coaching as a teacher training practice in England over the last twenty years. I provide a historical summary of where coaching, and later instructional coaching, appeared in policy and practice. I suggest how the policy influenced, and was influenced by, the practice, and the leadership, of key organisations and individuals, through complex policy technologies.

The final section of this chapter is entitled 'Three Conflicts in the Teacher Experience of Instructional Coaching'. In this section, I will argue that the assumptions about teachers, proposed in section one, and exemplified in section two, conflict with writing on good practice in instructional coaching and teacher professional development. This literature suggests that successful coaching is reliant on teacher agency, trust and reciprocity between teacher and coach. From this initial problem, I identify three key conflicts inherent in the widespread introduction of instructional coaching as a teacher training tool.

Linking to these conflicts and building on the theories of Bryk and Schneider (2002), I present a theoretical framework in which the teacher's experience in instructional coaching is influenced on three levels – by their developing professional identity and agency; by their collegial relationship

with their coach; and by their understanding of the school and policy context in which the coaching exists. I will synthesise the literature relating to these three areas of study to better analyse and understand the new teacher's experiences of instructional coaching.

In the conclusion to this chapter, I argue that the new teacher's role in instructional coaching is active but also passive, as an object but also a subject, and that their individual experiences of instructional coaching needs to be highlighted and explored, so that their complex role in this process is not assumed.

Performativity, Foucault and Three Assumptions About the Teacher in Instructional Coaching

Instructional Coaching in a Performative Culture

New teacher experience of the instructional coaching process in England is a gap in the literature. I argue that instructional coaching, as a phenomenon, has been born out of a performative culture. Ball (2003) define performativity as one of three "policy technologies" (p.215) in which individuals are held to account for their performance, measured through their outcomes. In business coaching, this might be their sales figures; in sports coaching, this might be goals scored; and in teaching, this might be their students' General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades or Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) scores. In a performative culture, there is a risk of "commodifying educational practices and experiences" (p.132) so that progress can be measured and calculated.

The history of instructional coaching suggests that, as a teacher training tool, it fits neatly within a "discourse of performativity", which Gerwitz (2002) defines as:

A way of thinking, talking and acting which gives priority to performance, productivity and output, and which values the measurement of these things as a means of ensuring "accountability" and "quality" (p.89).

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005), when summarising the literature relating to teacher education and policy, state that policy in a performative culture can appeal to:

A deep-seated view of learning as acquisition [...] It focused on assumed deficits in the current knowledge and skills of individual teachers, and saw what was to be learned as commodified content. The commodity could be clearly identified and therefore the extent to which it had been successfully acquired could be measured (p.111).

I argue that a performative culture encourages teachers to perform the "normal" (Perryman, 2006, p.159), in a heterarchy (Patrick et al., 2013; Wilkins et al, 2020) and that this "strong tendency towards normalisation" (Wilkins and Wood, 2009, p.293) encourages uncritical compliance with instructional coaching by training providers, school leaders, coaches and teachers. I also propose

that instructional coaching operates in a neoliberal ideology, where the new teacher is rewarded for competing against their peers and being what Ball (2003) describes as “ontologically insecure”:

Unsure whether we [the new teacher] are doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others, constantly looking to improve, to be better, to be excellent (p.220).

Kennedy (2014) highlights the “dilemma” in leading effective teacher professional development in that, to progress, teachers need the “space to exert agency” but, in a need to implement systems on a large scale, policy initiatives “instead seek and reward compliance and uniformity” (p.691). This dilemma will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Evaluations of instructional coaching as a teacher training method have concluded that the identified benefits may not be seen if instructional coaching was ‘rolled out’ on a larger scale (Kraft et al., 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Daly et al., 2023; Sims, 2019). However, instructional coaching has been implemented on a large scale across England. This wider implementation may suggest that, as in Kennedy’s (2014) dilemma, the need for compliance and uniformity in teacher training methods has outweighed the need for teacher agency in the coaching process.

Assumptions are made about how teachers will behave and operate in a neoliberal, performative, heterarchy and, in this section, alongside providing a reminder of a working definition of instructional coaching, I summarise three of these assumptions, which I believe have allowed instructional coaching to proliferate without attempting to understand the experience of individual teachers.

A Working Definition of Instructional Coaching

Joyce and Showers (1980) wrote that the most effective in-service teacher training “should include theory, demonstration, practice, feedback and classroom application” (p.379). Joyce and Showers were the first researchers to apply what is now understood as instructional coaching in England to the development of teaching. They focused their research on experienced teachers (beyond their training years) in the US, who needed fine tuning or an injection of new techniques (p.379). Their concern was how to take a teacher’s “awareness” of a technique, to their application of this technique, and then their use of it to solve problems in their classrooms (p.380). They talked about teachers as learners (p.379) and the need to shift teachers’ behaviours for teaching practice to be bettered (p.380).

Later, Joyce and Showers (1981) define coaching as being characterised by: “an observation and feedback cycle in an ongoing instructional or clinical situation”. They observed that coaching helps

teachers to transfer new teaching techniques into their “active repertoire” (p.170). The components of observation, feedback and an injection of input are the basis for what is now called ‘instructional coaching’ as it is used in teacher training curriculums (see, for example, Ambitions Institute, 2024; Teach First, 2020) and taught to leaders through professional development courses (Ambitions Institute, 2024b; National College, 2024; Keynote Educational, 2024; Teacher Development Trust, 2024). In 2019, Sims wrote that instructional coaching is “the best evidence-informed form of CPD (Continuous Professional Development)” (Sims, 2019), reinforced by three influential research papers in 2021 (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021; Sims and Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Hobbiss et al., 2021).

‘Instructional coaching’ has innumerable definitions in theory, which are diversified still further when applied in practice, and so a working definition is required for this thesis. As shared in chapter 1, I have chosen to take this definition from Steplab (2024a) which is a “customisable professional development platform” and is used by over 100,000 teachers (Steplab, 2024b). It provides an online tool to guide and track teachers and instructional coaches. They define instructional coaching as a practice which:

Involves one teacher working with another teacher, to help them take small, personalised steps to improve their practice. Instructional coaches help their teachers to get better by doing two things on a regular basis:

1. Identifying an area for improvement, usually based on a short observation.
2. Providing teachers with opportunities to rehearse, get feedback, and make a habit of their improvement.” (StepLab, 2024a)

Steplab’s diagrammatic summary of instructional coaching (Figure 1) will be used in this study to gain a shared understanding of ‘instructional coaching’.

Applying Foucault to Instructional Coaching

To better understand where the teacher fits into their own training and the instructional coaching process, I have selected ideas from Foucault (1973, 1988) - governmentality, technologies of the self and the expert gaze. From my initial observation of instructional coaching at Relay Graduate School of Education, recounted at the start of chapter 1, the power relations between teacher and coach appear complex and unclear. Foucault provides ideas which can be used to question the teacher’s power in the instructional coaching process.

My aim is not to suggest that instructional coaching is flawed as a teacher training method. In Foucault’s (1988) words, my aim is to point out:

On what kinds of assumptions, what kind of familiar, unchallenged

and unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest (pp.154-5).

I wish to explore the assumptions about the teacher, made by policy makers and educational leaders, on which rests the proliferation of instructional coaching in English teacher training. This exploration will aid in my understanding and analysis of the new teachers' experiences.

As Ball (2019) states, Foucault creates:

Spaces for acting and thinking differently about our relation to ourselves and to others, and identify and refuse and transgress the horizon of silent objectification within which we are articulated (p.133).

Elliott (2014) argues the dangers of taking Foucault's ideas, founded in institutions such as prisons and hospitals, and applying them to schools because "disciplinary power is far more fractured and diffuse in such institutions [schools] than Foucault recognises" (p.106). I acknowledge that schools are different from prisons and hospitals, and teachers are different from inmates and patients. I wish to use Foucault's ideas as a "toolbox" (BBC, 2019; Hope, 2014) through which to better understand the social and political influences on the development of instructional coaching and the new teacher's experience of that coaching.

As stated above, I propose three assumptions about teachers, on which I suggest the practice of instructional coaching rests, that I believe have been predominantly "unchallenged and unconsidered" (Foucault, 1988, pp.154-5) by policy makers and educational leaders during the widespread adoption of instructional coaching in English teacher training. These will be expanded upon, with reference to Foucault, in this section, and then exemplified in the second section of this chapter, through looking at the emergence of instructional coaching in England over the last twenty years.

Assumption 1: Teachers are passive subjects

Ball (2013b), states that Foucault focused on the "emergence of the modern individual [...] as an object of both political and scientific concern" (p.52). In educational policy, the teacher could be viewed as the object of concern (Ball, 2013a, 2013b; Perryman et al., 2017, 2019).

Perryman et al. (2017), in reference to Foucault's ideas, talk about teachers as policy translators and "subjects of policy" (p.765). However, Foucault's subjects are not presented here as subjective – their actions are not "based on personal beliefs or feelings" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024); their actions are influenced by "governmentality", which Ball (2013b) refers to not as "forms of domination but technologies of government that may lead to a state of domination" (p.12). The self

is “shot through with modern technologies of power” (Elliott, 2014, p.109). For the purposes of this study, I am interested in the impact of the technologies and mechanisms which have taken instructional coaching from political ideologies to a mandatory practice on some teacher training schemes in England.

New teachers are of particular interest because their self is more heavily influenced, and “shot through” (Elliott, 2014, p.109) with power - they could be seen as the subjects who are most influenced by policy because they have the least power to resist it. This power, held by policy makers and leaders, and not the new teachers, is so embedded that it becomes “technologies of the self” (Foucault, 1988, pp.16-49):

Technologies of the self draw on many of the tropes of self-improvement, like coaching and mentoring, which brings policy up close and personal, which intertwine policy with who we are as a teacher (Perryman et al., 2017, p.755).

These technologies create a teacher, an individual, who is “self-crafting” (p.754) - “dominated yet free” (p.755), “produced, rather than oppressed, animated rather than constrained” (Ball, 2013b, p.139). The teacher may not feel the oppression of power from the outside – from leaders, policy makers and training providers – as the power is sewn into the fabric of their developing professional identities.

However, Elliott (2014) raises a widespread criticism of Foucault’s work:

He steadfastly refused to consider how individuals might reflect on social practices and, in turn, transform aspects of their lives in the process (p.109).

Elliott argues that Foucault did not consider the agency of the subjects which, for the purposes of this thesis, are the new teachers receiving instructional coaching. If all new teachers’ actions are determined by power structures that are “rendered invisible” (Ball, 2013b, p.48) and create a “mechanism of self-monitoring” (Chiang et al., 2024, p.13), then teachers have no agency over, or active engagement with, the instructional coaching process. New teachers are not even able to see the power structures which are at play because they are internal, not external. Foucault could be suggesting a futility or at least a great difficulty in questioning these structures as it would involve the unpicking of a teacher’s professional identity. Therefore, the technologies on which policy flows into practice - how the power is enacted in oneself – are in some ways variable, based on the individual, but also fixed, in that they cannot be separated from the individual.

Ball (2019) writes about teachers being “remade within policy” (p.162). Policy identifies problems, in this case the need for the development of the technical skills of teachers, and “reform is made

necessary and inevitable” (p.119). In constructing the problems that “policies then seek to solve”, the policies “form the objects about which they speak” (p.216). Aligning with Foucault, new teachers could be seen to be crafted by policy. I propose that policy assumes that teachers’ development is a problem, and so teachers become that problem, and their need for development is assumed within the policies.

In their definitions of “policy actors”, Ball et al. (2011, p.625) define new teachers as “receivers” of policy. In their research, they found junior (new) teachers to be mainly “coping and defending” when it came to implementing policy initiatives (p.632). Much of their translation of policy, and therefore their feelings about it, came from their colleagues, and so their experience of “coherence and supportiveness and centrality to policy” varies (p.634). Ball et al.’s (2011) argument contrasts with teachers being imbued with the power of policy. The power is instead seen as something external and therefore variable, based on the new teacher’s social context and their collegial influences. So, paradoxically, new teachers could be assumed to be passive subjects of policy. They enact policy but they may also be passive to influence it – at best they can ‘defend’.

I propose that teachers are assumed, in the ideology that underlies the development of instructional coaching, to be either objects in the instructional coaching process or subjects who are still influenced by the power structures in a performative culture. Education policy reform makes them “subject to continuous interventions which aim to change and move them in relation to markers of ‘development’” (Ball, 2013a, p.50). My own philosophical underpinnings for this thesis, explained in chapter 3 (p.67), lie in contrast to this assumption – I believe, in agreement with Wilkins et al., (2011) that new teachers:

are not merely passive conduits of policy; they mediate, interpret, resist and subvert policy imperatives, bringing their own values to bear on the implementation of performative objectives (p.68).

I believe that new teachers play a part in constructing the phenomenon of instructional coaching and so their experiences are important. This study will provide a better understanding of their experiences of instructional coaching and challenge the assumption that they are passive subjects in the process. The need for continuous intervention on teachers’ practice is discussed through my next two proposed assumptions.

Assumption 2: Teachers’ practice is a problem

This assumption addresses two issues: that the teacher’s practice is a problem that needs fixing, and that the teacher’s practice can be separated from the teacher to fix it. Foucault (1973), in tracing the history of the treatment of patients, wrote about the role of the doctor, as the leader in identifying

and treating the patient. The doctor, working in a clinic – a place in which practice and training coincide - could have parallels to the coach, working in school, and the patient to the teacher. As stated above, I make these parallels in theory to question the assumptions on which coaching rests. I acknowledge the differences between hospitals and schools in reality.

As with Foucault's patient and ailment, instructional coaching creates a separation between the teacher and their practice – the coach could be seen to treat the problem with the new teacher's practice, just as Foucault's doctor treats the ailment as separate from patient. Instructional coaching could be seen as part of "a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal" (Foucault, 1979, p.198). The 'normal', to which the teacher's practice needs aligning, could be seen as 'what works' in education – those techniques for best classroom practice, based on research. But the decisions for what constitutes normal best practice is decided by those more powerful than the teacher (Biesta, 2010).

Biesta (2010) argues that there is a "democratic-deficit" (p.492) in using evidence to inform educational practices because this evidence base will always be filtered and selected. There is a danger that it will be used to reinforce pre-determined policies as opposed to informing those policies:

A particular use of evidence threatens to replace professional judgement and the wider democratic deliberation about the aims and ends and the conduct of education (pp.492-3).

Policy-makers appeal to a research base in support of a particular practice, like instructional coaching, and this provides an impenetrable, non-negotiable, grounding. Policy is "founded on uncritical assumptions about 'doing what works'" (Wilkins et al., 2020, p.33). Biesta (2017) describes this as an "uneducational way of thinking about education" – a "functionalist or instrumentalist view of education" (p.438). Policy, in appealing to a selection of research to inform 'what works' appeals to the idea that there is a right way of doing things in education. Instructional coaching could currently be seen as the right way to train teachers, according to research. In 2019, it was viewed as "the best evidence informed form of CPD" (Sims, 2019).

Hargreaves (2000) wrote about the four ages of teacher professional learning and, in developing in the final, post-professional era, teachers have to grapple with educational policy:

Trimm[ing] back the range and autonomy of teachers' classroom judgement, and a market-inspired application from the corporate sector, of systems of administration by performance management (p.169).

He argues that teachers have been subjected to “the micro-management of ever-tightening regulations and controls that are the very antithesis of any kind of professionalism” (p.169). Hargreaves echoes Kennedy’s (2014) “dilemma” (p.691) of teacher professional development requiring both teacher agency and teacher compliance simultaneously, but that, in a performative culture, compliance allows for greater visibility of teaching performance. The assumption that teacher’s practice is a problem, and that researched-based solutions can be found and administered (like Foucault’s (1973) doctor administering treatment) aligns not only with the needs of policymakers, but also, potentially, teachers.

It could be stated that teachers believe learning to be important and so believe that their own learning is of importance. The concepts therefore of professional development (PD) and continuous professional development (CPD) are aligned to teachers’ beliefs. Teachers may be susceptible to instructional coaching – because, as Joyce and Showers (1980) point out, “teachers are wonderful learners” (p.379) who require constant “fine tuning” (p.380). The teacher who is continuously learning and tuning could be seen by policy makers as the ideal worker and, in a performative culture, they are praised for their diligence, progress and ethical care for their work, the students and their outcomes. As Wilkins and Wood (2009), in their discussions on ITT in a performative culture, state:

Performativity necessitates a compliant workforce philosophically responsive to the needs of the performative state, otherwise professional values and practices based on critical enquiry will challenge and may undermine the central functionalism of the mechanism (p.294).

Compliance is necessary to secure policy implementation. Fillingham (1993) summarises Foucault’s ideas on “engineering” the individual through specialisation, minute control of activity, repetitive exercises, detailed hierarchies and normalising judgements (p.120). It could be argued that these five elements are present in the instructional coaching process.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005), in the introduction to their longitudinal study into what effects teacher workplace learning, argue that:

Current policy approaches to teacher development in the UK are over-focused on the acquisition of measurable learning outcomes, short-term gains, and priorities that are external to the teachers. They also assume and strive for impossible and counterproductive universality of approach. (p.109).

Ball (2013b) refers to the need for policy to provide a universal approach when he discusses the “contradictory bases of uniformity and individuality” (p.47). Training techniques, such as instructional coaching aim to address problems in the teacher on an individual level. However, the focus is also on creating uniformity across the development that teachers receive, which could detract from the needs of the teacher as an individual. The conflict in needing uniformity and individuality in instructional coaching is discussed later in this chapter (p.63).

The assumption that teachers are separate from their practice, and that practice can be fixed by removing it from the teacher, suggest that policy makers can create generic treatments that fix generic ailments in practice. The focus on generic solutions to complex problems may detract from a focus on the individual teacher and their experiences.

Assumption 3: Teachers require continuous observation

In an instructional coaching relationship, the new teacher is subject to the gaze of the coach (and, in turn, the gaze of the school leadership and the teacher’s training provider). The coach observes them in their teaching, identifies the problem, and instructs them on how to fix it. The beginning and end of the instructional coaching process is observation – observation to identify the problem and observation to check that the problem has been fixed. This is a cycle which is endless – when one problem is fixed, the next problem can be addressed – the embodiment of CPD.

Foucault (1979) used the panopticon – a prison design by Jeremy Bentham – as a metaphor for power relations between those in power and the individual. The design allows prisoners to be seen constantly by the guards, but the prisoners cannot see each other or the guards – they are constantly visible but laterally invisible. This design allows “a single gaze to scan the greatest number of faces, bodies, attitudes” (Foucault, 2020, p.72). The prisoners assume they are being watched and so comply with the rules set by the observers:

It was about whether an individual was behaving as he should, in accordance with the rule or not, and whether he was progressing or not (p.59).

The observed inmates cannot conspire with other prisoners, which improves their compliance. Though I acknowledge the many differences between teachers and prisoners, I continue to use Foucault’s ideas to question the assumptions on which instructional coaching rests (Foucault, 1988). The cells in the panopticon have parallels to classrooms, where teachers are alone for most of the day. However, the individual new teacher (those who are perhaps “furthest away from the centre of decision-making, from the power of the state” (Foucault, 2020, p.73) could feel observed, even when they are not actually being observed. They thus behave as their coach wishes them to, in the

name of best practice for the students. This compliance potentially makes them ideal learners in the instructional coaching process.

Perryman (2006) defines “panoptic performativity” (p.149) in relation to teachers working under continuous regimes of inspection. Foucault (1977) describes this as a form of disciplinary power using the “simple instruments” of “hierarchical observation” and “normalising judgements” (p.170). New teachers, entering the profession now, in their early twenties, could be described as “neo-performative” (Wilkins et al., 2020). They have grown up, and been taught in, a performative culture and so their ability to question the gaze that they are under is potentially more limited.

However, this disciplinary power is not necessarily hierarchical; it could be described as heterarchical. Ball (2003) describes a “labyrinth of performativity” (p.220) in which teachers do not just feel power externally, from above, but also laterally from peers, and internally, from themselves. Ball (2008) goes on to see this shift as a move from government to “governance” and that this “governance is accomplished through the ‘informal authority’ of diverse and flexible networks” (p.747). This more complex and opaque policy technology is discussed in relation to the emergence of instructional coaching as a training practice later in this chapter.

Elliott (2014) cites common criticisms of Foucault’s view of the individual as lacking autonomy – that individuals are being controlled by those in charge, even when individuals believe that they are acting autonomously. However, observation is the start and end of the coaching process and there is increased use of technology to film teachers’ practice (iRIS Connect, 2025 and Swivl, 2025), track their progress and share it with leaders. Potentially, the “docile and capable” (Foucault, 1979, p.294) teacher, produced in and by a performative culture, welcomes observation and, at all times, acts as if they are being observed.

In the next section, I track the development of instructional coaching in English educational policy in reference to the three assumptions above, and the ideology of teacher development on which the proposed assumptions are based.

The Development of Instructional Coaching in English Educational Policy

My aim, in tracing this history, is to argue that instructional coaching, as a teacher training practice, was born out of a performative culture and a neoliberal ideology which made assumptions about teachers. These assumptions allowed policymakers and leaders to hold individual teachers responsible for their performance and have replicable tools for monitoring and improving teacher performance. The development of the teacher’s technical skills fed the performative culture in which there was a need for visible, tracible and replicable teacher development techniques to ensure rapid

improvement (Ball, 2013a). Instructional coaching was influenced by a movement which praised the development of practical teaching skills, through repetitive practice of techniques, to develop from novice teacher to expert teacher (Ericsson and Pool, 2016; Berliner, 2001; Berliner, 2004).

I will also exemplify that there were policy technologies at work in the rise of instructional coaching, which disseminated power to a variety of policy actors, who, though acting autonomously, fed a common narrative. This narrative of the technical expert, the willing novice, instruction, practice and the development of craft is all built on the potentially unquestionable base of 'what works'. The narrative built momentum through coalition and Conservative governments from 2010, eventually creating the "golden thread" of teacher development in 2022 (Department for Education, 2022, p.5). I argue that the new teacher is not viewed as active in this process; their 'golden thread' is pre-decided, and instructional coaching (as a method used to move them further along the thread), is born out of a performative culture that marginalises their experiences as individuals and therefore makes assumptions about them and their experiences.

This history, and the assumptions on which I propose it is based, led me to ask my overarching research question: *How do new teachers experience instructional coaching as an element of their teacher training in England?* My aim is to develop an understanding of the new teacher's experience, not based on assumptions, but based on an understanding of them as individuals with the potential to be active subjects in the instructional coaching process.

Current Government Control Over Teacher Training

Since September 2021, some new teachers (those in the first three years of teaching) on training routes, through certain Lead Providers (see, for example, Ambitions Institute, 2024a; Teach First, 2020) have received regular instructional coaching with their mentor as a form of professional development. Though the coaching is provided by the mentor in school, its form is determined by the teacher, school or trust's chosen training provider who write the teacher training curriculum.

Furlong (2013), when tracing the history of teacher education within a neoliberal ideology, notes that New Labour's educational policy, held firm to an "aspiration to use targets and research-based prescriptive strategies in the development of more direct control of teachers' classroom practice" (p.131). The Conservative government's introduction of 'frameworks', from 2019-2021, against which training providers planned their curriculums, harks back to New Labour's need for centralised control of how teachers are trained. The ITT Core Content Framework (Department for Education, 2019c) and ECF (Department for Education, 2019a) provide "learn that" and "learn how to"

statements to mandate the knowledge and skills required by the individual teacher. In relation to professional development and coaching, for example, the Core Content Framework states:

Learn that... Effective professional development is likely to be sustained over time, involve expert support or coaching and opportunities for collaboration.
Learn how to... [...] Seek challenge, feedback and critique from mentors and other colleagues in an open and trusting working environment. (Department for Education, 2019c, p.24)

These frameworks do not stipulate that teacher training curriculums must use instructional coaching. However, these frameworks align with the “specialised” National Professional Qualification (NPQ) frameworks (Department for Education, 2020a). These include a “Leading Teaching” NPQ (Department for Education, 2020b) and “Leading Teacher Development” NPQ (Department for Education, 2020c), designed for middle and senior leaders who are responsible for developing teaching and professional development in their schools. Both frameworks, which determine the curriculums of these NPQs, state that leaders should:

Learn how to... Plan, conduct, and support colleagues to conduct, regular, expert-led conversations (which could be referred to as mentoring or coaching) about teaching (pp. 14-15).

The coaching that the frameworks refer to, and how it has been enacted in schools since the introduction of the ITT, ECF and NPQ frameworks, is a form of instructional coaching. It is relevant to track how a form of instructional coaching came to be encouraged by the Department for Education’s now established ITT Core Content framework, ECF and NPQ frameworks, and consequently a part of training providers’ curriculums. Also how, seemingly synonymously with policy, instructional coaching came to be part of some English schools’ and leading training providers’ professional development programmes.

In their ‘Delivering World Class Professional Development’ policy paper (Department for Education, 2022), the Department for Education states that:

Our teacher development reforms have created a ‘golden thread’ of high-quality evidence underpinning the support, training and development available through the entirety of a teacher’s career (p.5).

The Department for Education have created a framework journey for teachers to progress through – from trainee to Trust Leader, all “inspected by Ofsted to ensure it is of the highest quality” (p.4). The use of the frameworks, and the tighter control over the content and methods of teacher training in England, highlight the assumption by policy makers that teachers are passive subjects. They are the focus and subjects of change in educational policy – they are “the foundations of the education

system” (p.4), but they are passive in their power to influence or actively engage with it. As Furlong (2013) points out, teachers needed to accept “a more externally managed vision of their own professional expertise” (p.128).

Earlier in this chapter, I drew on Foucault’s ideas on technologies of the self, which suggest that the teacher is externally managed to perform towards the normal to such an extent that they eventually become internally managed. The current government control over the “golden thread” (Department for Education, 2022, p.5) of teacher development is built on a focus on developing a teacher’s practical skills, which is discussed in the next part of this chapter.

The Need for Practical Teacher Instruction in a Performative Culture

One of the first mentions of ‘coaching’ and ‘instruction’, in relation to state education in England, were in the 2010 coalition government’s ‘The Case for Change’ (Department for Education, 2010a) paper which provided evidence to support the claims made in their first education white paper, ‘The Importance of Teaching’ (Department for Education, 2010b).

This shift in language is worthy of note here as it represents the development of ideologies and the movement of policies and practices from other contexts. The language shift presents a reformulation of teaching – from teaching and training to ‘instruction’. ‘Instruction’ suggests a “technocratic approach to pedagogy” (Kretchmar et al., 2018, p.424) in which the power is held by those with technical skills. The focus on technical skills plays to an “audit culture” (Wilkins, 2010, p.391) in which technical skills can be more easily categorised, and tracked, and positive performance against that tracking can be rewarded. It also suggests a separation between teacher and technique, linking to the separation of Foucault’s (1973) patient and ailment in the clinic. The word ‘instruction’ aligns teaching with sport, where teachers are named instructors or coaches. The language suggests similarities between learning to teach and learning, for example, to play golf, allowing the process to be simplified, broken down and, again, separated from the teacher. The alignment of teaching and instruction could be seen to be part of a “techno-rationalist argument” (Wilkins and Wood, 2009, p.286), separating the often-invisible complexities of the teacher, as an individual, from their observable, trackable practice.

The use of the word ‘instruction’, which would later be used in ‘instructional coaching’ also shows the shift of educational policies and practices from the US. The word presents an issue with semantics at the outset of instructional coaching: ‘Instruction’ in the US is more closely translated as the word ‘teaching’ in England. Therefore, the use of the term ‘instructional coaching’ in the US suggests the processes involved with coaching teachers in how to teach. However, an ‘instruction’ in England is a direction or an order so instructional coaching in England suggests that the coaching

involves telling the teacher what to do (White and MacIntosh, 2022). The blurring between definitions suggests that, by the time the term 'instructional coaching' reached the new teacher in England, whether the purpose was to teach them instruction or instruct them in how to teach was unclear.

With reform comes a change in language, which allows for differentiation between those using the new language and those who do not. Ball (2003) suggest that to thrive in a performative culture, "We [teachers] must become adept at presenting and representing ourselves with this new vocabulary and its prescribed signifiers" (p.218). Ball (2003) argues that teachers "learn that [they] can become more than [they] were and be better than others" (p.219). Part of being successful in this competitive environment is using the language that allows the teacher to be part of a culture that rewards them for their performance. An important part of this culture is performative competition between teachers, leaders, schools, training providers and education systems.

Exemplifying the focus on comparison and competition, 'The Case for Change' paper (Department for Education, 2010a) placed emphasis on better understanding what was 'working' in other countries' education systems, particularly those which "out-perform us":

It is clearly important that we learn from other countries...there is now a significant body of knowledge from which to learn (p.5).

By 'performance', the paper is referring to several quantifiable measures, such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores and graduation rates (pp. 2-6). Four approaches were identified in high performing systems, two of which were: "placing coaches in schools to support teachers" and "selecting and developing instructional leaders" (p.9). The focus in this white paper on encouraging the replication of teacher development techniques used in other countries with higher academic outcomes, suggests coaching had its roots in a performative culture, where coaching was used to support teachers to increase student outcomes. Kennedy (2014) calls this the "global hyper-narrative" which links improving teachers to improving student outcomes to improving a "state's economic competitiveness" (p.691).

Feedback and practice (elements of instruction coaching as defined earlier in this chapter) are highlighted as important to training as seen in other, higher achieving, educational systems:

It is crucial that during the period of training and induction, teachers are given plenty of opportunity to practise skills, that they are exposed to outstanding skills and receive plenty of feedback and coaching. (Department for Education, 2010a, p.9).

And:

The evidence is that effective systems need principals who are trained, empowered, accountable and provide instructional leadership (Department for Education, 2010a, p.12).

These policy papers assume a need for change and that change needs to happen to teachers and their teaching – reinforcing my proposed assumptions that teaching is a problem, and teachers need continuous improvement.

In the 'Importance of Teaching' (Department for Education, 2010b), the white paper that followed 'The Case for Change', the emphasis remained on the need to "train [teachers] rigorously and effectively, focusing on classroom practice" and the development of "practical teaching skills" (p.9). There was a call for more teacher training to take place "on the job...working with other teachers to develop effective practice". The focus on practice, rather than theory (which is referred to in the paper as "sitting and listening to a presentation" (p.19)) in teacher training and development, and the encouragement of teacher-to-teacher support, seems to be setting the scene for what is now recognised as instructional coaching.

Instructional coaching developed in parallel to a favouring of the development of practical teaching skills and in-school teacher training, as opposed to the understanding and application of theory more associated with university-based teacher training routes. The focus on practical skills allows teachers to be more closely observed whilst practising teaching. This observation allows for closer monitoring, reminiscent of "panoptic performativity" (Perryman, 2006, p.148).

Michael Gove, the secretary of state for Education from 2010 to 2014, shared his ideology of teaching in a speech to Cambridge University:

Teaching is a craft, and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom (Department for Education, 2013).

This statement reinforces my proposed assumption that teachers require constant observation but also that the 'craft' of teaching can be separated from the teacher. It also highlights the hierarchy between trainer and teacher as a master and apprentice - an expert and a novice.

The Shift from Governing to Governance of Teacher Training

Prior to the above-mentioned white papers, in 1996, David Hargreaves, a then Professor of Education at Cambridge University, gave a lecture to the Teaching Training Agency. He identified the issues with teaching as a research-based profession and the application of theory in teacher training. In his introduction he stated that:

Trainee teachers soon see the yawning gap between research and practice and the low value of research as a guide to the solution of practical problems [...] there is no agreed knowledge base for teachers, so they largely lack a shared technical language (Hargreaves, 1996, p.2).

The speech went on to make comparisons with how shared knowledge is agreed through research in medicine. Hargreaves' ideas contrast with Joyce and Showers (1980) who saw teachers' practice as the application of theory, not as two separate concepts, and is reminiscent of Foucault's (1973) ideas on the clinic and the role of the doctor treating the patient. Hargreaves making teaching comparable to medicine possibly highlights an ideology that appeals to the solving of problems in the social sciences through appeal to the natural sciences. It also links to the assumption that a teacher can be separated from their practice so that a set of techniques can be agreed in isolation from them.

Hargreaves' ideas went on to influence policy by providing further support for coaching. In 2010, the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services published 'Creating a self-improving school system' (Hargreaves, 2010). This paper describes the need for teacher and leader development within and between schools. He recommends coaching as a form of peer-to-peer professional development. He recommends separating the practice from the person:

The imperative task is to separate *what* they do (leadership) from *who* they are (leaders) so that their practices can be captured, codified and taught to others, often through mentoring and coaching (p.18).

The idea that good practice can be observed, broken down, categorised, taught and reproduced in others is the basis of instructional coaching as it is now enacted in English schools. Hargreaves' (2010) aim appeared to be to create better teachers and leaders, and to create them quicker: "It is now possible for the most talented to become an assistant headteacher within three years" (p.18). It suggests a need to shortcut teacher and leader learning and to create an efficient professional development system. This system would be sustained by identifying, understanding and sharing best practice, which is a theme that will run through Conservative educational policy.

At this point in 2010, Hargreaves (2010) identified that “mentoring and coaching has not been a normal part of teacher training” (p.21). It suggests an agenda which ups the support of the trainee teacher in school, and brings monitoring into school, through the mentor. This conflation of mentoring and coaching paved the way for what would become the instructional coach, a role given to the in-school mentor.

Hargreaves’ role in the development of educational policy, could present what Ball calls governance, as opposed to governing (Ball, 2008), which is the “achievement of political ends by different means” (p.748). Ball shares and discusses diverse networks in and around educational policy, made up of influential individuals from the public and private sectors – the “new voices” in policy making. The increase of voices in the field of policy making points towards the focus on teacher instruction and coaching growing more out of a heterarchy, making policy seem “apparently depoliticised” (p.753).

Cochran-Smith (2018) defines three types of teacher educator reformer – “entrepreneurial, managerial and democratic” (p.584) - who present different problems needing to be solved by reform. Hargreaves could be seen as one of numerous entrepreneurial reformers, in the history of the development of instructional coaching who:

Construct the major problem as university teacher education’s heavy emphasis on theory [and] lack of attention to the nuts and bolts of practice (p.585).

Patrick et al. (2013) describe the dissemination of voice and power, to a variety of policy actors outside of the immediate political stage, as “entrepreneurial self-government” (p.507) which suggests a distribution of power and leadership to others across disciplines. But Ball (2003) argues that this is not a “simple strategy of de-regulation” but a process of “re-regulation” (p.217). The use of other voices that seemingly influence, and knowingly or unknowingly bolster, policy are part of a complex policy technology. These complex technologies are exemplified through the proliferation of instructional coaching in English teacher training.

Another policy ‘actor’ in the history of instructional coaching is David Carter, who fits Peruzzo et al.’s (2022) critical description of education policy actors:

The actors are adept and agile moving in and across sites of persuasion, exchange and opportunity, both public and more intimate. In doing so, they invest in and accumulate forms of nodal capital (status, income, influence – awards, peerages, knighthoods, honorary positions) (p.12).

Carter, in 2015, was a knighted former principal and academy trust CEO, and the Regional Schools Commissioner for the Southwest. He led an influential government review into English teacher

training, which widened the gaze of those in power to the development of the mentors, working with the teachers.

Extending the Gaze to the Mentor

The focus on the in-school mentor, to better fix the practical problems in a new teacher's practice, is picked up by the 'Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT)' (Department for Education, 2015).

In terms of the development of instructional coaching in policy, there are three important themes in this review:

- teacher professional development is incremental and happens over the course of a career, not just at the start
- knowledge is key in a teacher training curriculum and breaking down what good teachers do is crucial so that it can be explicitly taught
- support roles, especially ITT mentors, need a better understanding of how teachers learn, and they need explicit training in how to best 'teach' teachers. (Department for Education, 2015)

There is also an acknowledgement, which is echoed in the ECF and NPQ frameworks in 2021, that the process of training and developing teachers is complex. Interestingly, this acknowledgement of complexity does not lead to a recommendation in the review for a variety of different methods. Instead there is a call for a set body of knowledge of *how* teachers learn, and *what* they need to know, to anchor the complexity. This is the same call Hargreaves made in his paper in 2010 (Hargreaves, 2010). This creation of a set body of knowledge, defined through policy, allows for further control of the individual. It assumes that the teacher is the problem and, through observation, problems in individuals can be identified and fixed. The use of observation to identify problems is reminiscent of the individuals in the Panopticon whose observation and correction are "organised around the norm, in terms of what was normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do" (Foucault, 2020, p.59). Applying this to teaching, normal teaching practice is defined in policy, by appealing to what the identified 'masters' do, and teachers are measured by their alignment to that normal.

Instructional coaching for new teachers is currently delivered predominantly by the assigned mentors in the new teachers' placement schools. Carter's focus on mentor training paved the way for mentors to be highlighted in policy as an area for improvement in English teacher training, and for their role to have an 'instructional' focus. The review recommends that mentors be trained "how to deconstruct and articulate their practice, how to coach and how to support" (Department for Education, 2015, p.41). This deconstruction of practice aimed to make "explicit the reasoning and underlying assumptions of experienced teachers" (Department for Education, 2015, pp.21-22). The

breaking down of practice is a key component of what is now termed 'instructional coaching' in English schools. The Carter Review (Department for Education, 2015) suggests a need to dispel the mystery surrounding mastery so that it could be defined and replicated, and to extend the gaze to the mentors - those developing the teachers.

One of Carter's recommendations was to produce mentor standards, comparable to the Teachers' Standards but, unlike the Teachers' Standards (Department for Education, 2011), no one was assessed against these standards. The Mentor Standards (Department for Education, 2016a) were published in 2016 to "help bring greater coherence and consistency to the school-based mentoring arrangements for trainee teachers" (p.3). One of three key aims of the standards was to "contribute towards the building of a culture of coaching and mentoring in schools" (p.3). The altruistic reasons for the need for consistency in teacher development, provided by government standards and policy, can be questioned in a performative culture (Chiang et al., 2024). The need for consistency in policy highlights the conflict, (which will be discussed later in the chapter), around the need to focus on both the universal and individual in teacher development. The role of the mentor could be seen to adapt the universal for the individual. However, if the mentor role is made more universal, this may limit their ability to adapt and respond to the individual teacher. It is important to better understand how the teacher experiences this conflict, especially in their relationship with their coach (who is also their mentor).

The 'Controlled Decontrol' of Teachers

The focus on the teacher's instruction was extended to the Conservative government's next white paper, 'Education Excellent Everywhere' (Department for Education, 2016b) but the methods for this instruction (identifying, sharing and embedding 'what works') were placed in the hands of the individual schools and training providers. Here the government did not mandate *how* the teachers are taught: "We believe that outcomes matter more than methods." (p.9) and focused more on measuring the outputs of these well-taught teachers. Ball (2013b) refers to this as a:

A controlled decontrol, the use of contracts, targets and performance monitoring to steer from a distance (p.48).

This claim suggests policy is directing through technologies of self (Foucault, 1988, pp.16-49). In a performative culture, teachers and leaders in schools are given the shared goal of improved performance and, though the path to that goal appears unpaved, they are in fact acting in line with what is expected of them. This seeming handing over of power to schools is exemplified through the

term “school-led system” (Department for Education, 2016b, p.6), introduced in this 2016 paper, and building on Hargreaves’ (2010) recommendations for a self-sustaining system.

The Department for Education gave performance targets to schools, and teacher training providers, but did not stipulate ways of achieving those targets: “the teaching profession is no longer forced to conform to an orthodoxy on teaching methods” (Department for Education, 2016b, p.25). These changes were cited as aiming to “empower and extend the reach of the best leaders” (Department for Education, 2016b, p.40). This presentation of the school-led system as empowering suggests a handing over of power from central government to the school leaders and possibly even the teachers. Ball (2013) questions this dissemination of power in a performative culture:

We take responsibility for working harder, faster and better as part of our sense of personal worth and our estimation of the worth of others (p.139).

The dissemination of power puts focus on individual leaders as being responsible for performance and encourages individuals to value what the policy-makers value and measure themselves against it. As Chiang et al. (2024) state:

The mission of neoliberal governmentality is mainly completed through subjectification, in which discourses of fear and hope install care of self into teachers’ self-knowledge thus engendering the mechanisms of self-monitoring (p.1).

If responsibility for performance lies with the individual schools, leaders and teachers, then self-monitoring is encouraged. An encouragement of self-monitoring makes the teacher open to individual performance observation and enhancement, through coaching.

Furlong (2013) argues that the setting of targets encourages competition between teacher training providers. He recalls:

Intense competition among resource-hungry, entrepreneurial providers was encouraged because it gave government the opportunity to intervene on an unprecedented scale in defining what teacher education and indeed what professional practice should be (p.39).

Furlong’s interpretation suggests that, instead of empowering the teaching profession, the policy changes pitched providers against each other, competing for funds and other tangible outcomes. The aim of competition, in a neoliberal ideology, is to drive up standards. However, if the required standards are dictated, then there is still control over the methods to achieve those outcomes. The methods may converge towards a ‘norm’. Again, the assumption by the policy maker is that the teacher is the problem, and their practice needs to be corrected, alongside their attitudes, to ensure

they are compliant in a performative culture, and this becomes part of the role of the training provider:

Universities and other providers of teacher education were required to deliver teachers willing and able to embrace this centrally defined, target-driven culture (p.40).

The handing over of the power to decide, and share on a national scale, the methods for instructing (both students and teachers) is exemplified by the creation of the Teacher Development Trust. In 2012, the Training and Development Agency for Schools, which was responsible for “the training and development of the entire school workforce” (National Archive, 2023) was closed and its functions for ITT, and regulation of the teaching profession, was passed to the Teaching Agency, which was later subsumed into the National College for Teaching and Leadership. This meant that there was no central agency responsible for the professional development of teachers.

The Championing of the Ideal Individual in a Neoliberal Ideology

In response to the need for a central body to control teacher training, in 2012, the Teacher Development Trust (TDT) was founded by a group of teachers (Teacher Development Trust, 2022). This teacher-led organisation embodied what Gove believed about transforming the system:

I am so convinced that the best people to be driving change in our education system and setting higher standards than ever before should be teachers (Department for Education, 2013).

Speaking at the Department for Education to teachers in 2013, following the establishment of the TDT, Gove mentioned, by name, numerous individual teachers and schools who were leading practice in English schools. He stated that “the voices of great teachers are becoming more audible in the education debate” (Department for Education, 2013). Policy actors did not just include educational leaders and researchers, such as Hargreaves and Carter, but practising teachers as well. One of these individuals was David Weston, the Chief Executive of the newly formed TDT. Gove stated in this speech that he was “indebted” (Department for Education, 2013) to the work of Weston in setting up the TDT. This organisation, and its close relationship with government ministers and policy decision makers, was therefore pivotal in the development of an accepted norm of teacher training methods, including instructional coaching.

The government, through the championing of individual teachers, could be seen to be heralding the ideal neoliberal worker to which other teachers should aspire in a performative culture. These teachers accept responsibility for developing their own profession (Furlong, 2013; Hargreaves,

2000). They are the masters to which other teachers can aspire. Gove aligning with them and praising them for their diligence to the cause of improving teaching, exemplifies the sophisticated technologies at play in policy development, which aims to control (through seemingly empowering) individual teachers.

The praising of individuals, and the handing over of power to teacher-led organisations, suggests a move to a heterarchy. But, as stated earlier in this chapter, the power could be seen as more of a “de-concentration of control” (Wilkins et al, 2020, p.32). Teachers are still controlled. But political power, and how it is wielded, is just made more complex and therefore less visible to the teacher (Ball, 2003). Critically, the government’s public encouragement of a teacher-led organisation, such as the TDT, could be seen as part of a sophisticated policy technology, which Ball defines as the “calculated deployment of techniques and artefacts to organize human forces and capabilities into functioning networks of power” (p.216).

Wilkins and Wood (2009) argue that this “quasi-devolution” of power, by the state, could be a step in the process of closing the “performativity loop”: where “the profession fully polices itself” and “dissent becomes increasingly ineffectual because it is increasingly viewed with suspicion and alarm from within”. Eventually, because the performative culture is not led from above but all around the teacher – on their social media, in their schools and in their collegial groups - “the consequences of challenging normalisation are potentially disastrous” (p.290). However the power is disseminated, and whoever holds that power in the development of education policy, to define the problems and suggest the solutions, can be contested. But the assumptions about teachers on which instructional coaching rests remain the same: teachers and their teaching is a problem, and they require continuous observation and improvement.

In 2015, the TDT published ‘Developing Great Teaching’ (Teacher Development Trust, 2015) which provided evidence from internal reviews of teacher professional development. They stated that:

Another consistent message across all the reviews was that in the most effective CPD, specialists supported teachers by modelling, providing observation and feedback, and coaching (p.7).

The TDT continued its close relationship with the government and therefore continued to be a driving influence in English education policy. In 2016, Weston, who Gove was “indebted” to in 2013, was chosen by the government to chair the Teachers’ Professional Development Expert Group (Department for Education, 2016c), which created the Department for Education’s Standards for

Teachers' Professional Development (Department for Education, 2016d) in the same year. Five standards were written, including "Professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge" (p.1) with the guidance stating that effective professional development needed "support from someone in a coaching and/or mentoring role to provide modelling and challenge" (Department for Education, 2016e, p.9).

The TDT stated that these standards were,

Intended to be used to improve understanding, to develop effective and long-term plans and to hold other stakeholders to account for their role in the process (Teacher Development Trust, 2022).

In 2023, the TDT started to run training courses, open to teachers and leaders, including a 'Pedagogical Coaching Programme' and it currently runs 'Instructional Coaching Training for Schools or Trusts' (Teacher Development Trust, 2025). Given the TDT's extended reach into schools, their support for coaching as an effective form of professional development will almost certainly have added to its growing popularity and the establishment of its place on teacher training and development curriculums across England from 2020.

My aim here is not to disparage the TDT's work on teacher development, or to question individual leaders' motivations for developing teaching, but to use it as an example to highlight the policy technologies at play on and around, the new teacher. The technologies legitimised the assumptions made about them and provided the culture and ideology in which instructional coaching developed.

The Rise of the Networked Teacher

Ball (2003) argues that "policies of reform produce new kinds of teacher subjects" (p.217). One of Ball's new type of teacher subjects could be exemplified by Harry Fletcher-Wood, who in 2014 was the Head of History and Professional Development at Greenwich Free School – a school that was publicly noted by Gove for the "innovations of its teachers" (Department for Education, 2013). Fletcher-Wood wrote a blog, aimed at teachers and leaders, and his writing, in 2014, is the earliest mentions of instructional coaching practices being used in English schools. Fletcher-Wood, writing about the introduction of instructional coaching at his school stated:

It may just be the earth-moving, saw-sharpening technique which allows leaders to help all their teachers improve; while it may sound intimidating in places, I've become convinced of its merits (Fletcher-Wood, 2014).

His popular blog and Twitter feed tracked the influence of US practices into English teaching practice, notably Doug Lemov's 'Teach Like a Champion' (Lemov, 2010) techniques and Bambrick-

Santoyo's instructional coaching methods taken from the 2012 book, 'Leverage Leadership' (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012). Bambrick-Santoyo (2016) also wrote the influential 'Get Better Faster: A 90-day plan for coaching new teachers'. The title of this book is reminiscent of Ball's (2013) comment about teachers in performative cultures "working harder, faster and better" in order to compete and succeed (p.139).

My aim, in noting Fletcher-Wood's impact on the popularisation of instructional coaching, is to provide an example of how new teachers' practice is influenced by a conglomeration of actors from research, policy and practice. I wish to highlight how these influences form the new teacher as both active and passive – free and yet still constrained. This interaction with policy, and the potential effect on the new teacher's experience of instructional coaching, is a key relationship addressed in this thesis.

Fletcher-Wood trained as a teacher through the Teach First Leadership Development Programme (LDP) and, on leaving teaching, he joined Teach First as their Associate Director of Research Evaluation and Impact. Teach First was a key organisation and 'policy actor' in leading the widespread introduction of instructional coaching into teacher training. In 2017, just after Fletcher-Wood left the organisation, Teach First restructured its curriculum and the support roles that teachers received on the programme. Prior to this shift, in addition to a tutor from the accrediting university and a mentor in their placement school, trainee teachers were assigned a 'Leadership Development Officer' (LDO). In 2016, the LDO became the Participant Development Lead (PDL) whose role was in part to:

Support tracking of progress, identifying areas for development and ensuring pupil impact targets are met (as measured by external assessment averaged across a Local Area team) (Teach First, 2016, p.1).

The training for this role was standardised across local areas. The PDL delivered one-to-one coaching support to trainees, but this support was unified to ensure parity of trainee experience. This addition of accountability and uniformity to one-to-one support points to a move towards instructional coaching as it is now understood in English schools.

Elliott (2018) provides a critique of Teach First and its ambassadors who completed the two-year LDP. She argued that Teach First created "a Trojan army of mini neo-liberalists" and that Teach First culture, at the time, was performative and had "neo-liberal ideological underpinnings" (p.272).

Kretchmar et al., 2018 argue that Teach for All, the umbrella organisation of which Teach First is a

member, played a part in technicalising teaching, which they argue is based on “a vision” of “best practices’[...] build on the assumptions of a market-based ideology” (p.431). Ball (2008) in writing about the power of networks in education, including those formed in and around Teach First, talked about the power of individuals in such organisations:

These individuals represent a new chronotype of policy, as people who ‘get things done’– they bring passion, drive and dynamism and a new and different kind of expertise to the tackling of social problems (p.758).

There is a seemingly symbiotic relationship between policy makers and some teachers, like Fletcher-Wood, in a performative culture. Cochran-Smith et al., 2018, when writing about teacher educator reform in the United States (US), may describe Fletcher-Wood as an “agent of reform” (p.573).

From Universities to Graduate Schools of Education

In 2016, the think tank Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published the paper: ‘Beyond the Plateau: A Case for An Institute of Advanced Teaching’ (Hood, 2016). In this paper, Matt Hood, a former teacher, Teach First ambassador and government policy advisor, cites perceived issues with teacher professional development, including “a lack of effective coaches and mentors within schools” (p.18) and how they could be solved with the “creation of a new school-led, higher education training institution” (p.3) and the delivery of a Master in Expert Teaching programme. The master’s curriculum would include:

Classroom coaching with participants’ faculty fellows. These sessions would give participants an intense one-to-one session with an expert teacher (p.26).

The paper speaks repeatedly of the importance of developing teachers in a school-led system, following the rhetoric of Hargreaves (2010) and Conservative education policy. However, because most schools do not have the resources to plan and deliver effective teacher development programmes, “they will need to pool their expertise and resources in order to create a genuinely school-led solution to the professional development challenge” (p.9). This collaboration echoes Hargreaves (2010) self-sustaining system.

Alongside this paper, the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (National Archives, 2024) came into effect, which allowed the establishment of private higher education institutions without the need for a Royal Charter. In 2017, funded partly by the government, Hood established the Institute for Teaching (IfT) (Schools Week, 2017), which merged in 2018 with Ambition School Leadership to become Ambition Institute (Wikipedia, 2022). The aim of the Institute was to develop expert

teachers and therefore train leaders to develop these teachers. At the launch of the IfT in 2017, one of the fellows at the Institute stated that:

While the needs of teachers are unique, we have much to learn by looking sideways at what other sectors have learnt about developing expertise in systematic and scalable ways (Schools Week, 2017).

As with Hargreaves' (2010) call to learn from the medical profession, the IfT called for a more systematic approach to agreeing and sharing a knowledge base for teacher development. The need also for any professional development to be "scalable" suggests the need for consistency which would align with the government's need for uniform standards of teacher training and development, and therefore accountability for teachers and school leaders. This paper provides the context for instructional coaching, a practice in which set knowledge and skills are shared and assessed, to be adopted by leaders. The "looking sideways" at other sectors and the need for "systematic" (Schools Week, 2017) approaches suggest these new education training institutions would flourish in a neo-liberal ideology.

US Graduate Schools of Education (GSEs) were cited as one of the inspirations for an institute in England (Hood, 2016). The Dean of Relay GSE (mentioned in my introduction) in 2015, Mayme Hostetter, was one of the founding members of Deans for Impact, an organisation "representing leaders in educator preparation who are committed to transforming educator preparation" (Deans for Impact, 2015a). Two papers, written by Deans for Impact, were heavily referenced in the new Teach First curriculum in 2017 and inspired the development of instructional coaching at Ambition Institute: 'The Science of Learning' (Deans for Impact, 2015b) and 'Practice with Purpose: The Emerging Science of Teacher Expertise' (Deans for Impact, 2016). In 'Practice with Purpose', a five-step process of 'deliberate practice' is proposed, including setting "specific goals" and responding to "high-quality feedback" (Deans for Impact, 2016, p.3).

The Deans for Impact pre-determined structure for one-to-one instructional conversations provided a basis for what would become a wide-spread instructional coaching structure in English teacher training. The creation of Deans for Impact also mirrors the creation of the Teacher Development Trust and Ambition Institute, with teachers and leaders in the field joining together to influence professional development practices on a larger scale. Cochran-Smith et al. (2018) note that the GSEs signalled "a deliberate move to disrupt and bypass university education and leave behind business as usual" (p.576). In this case, GSEs were disrupting the norm, whilst also potentially aligning to the new norm set by the government. The relationships between policy and practice here suggest policy

technologies working to develop teacher education in a way that appears organic but also follows a rhetoric about teachers and teacher training set in policy years before.

The 'Golden Thread' of Teacher Development

The “plateau” (Hood, 2016, p.6) which Hood refers to in the IPPR paper, is a metaphor for what happens to a teacher’s development after their training years. This plateau and the associated issues – low teacher retention and observed levelling off of skills – were addressed in the 2019 government paper, ‘Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy’. The paper was published with advice from Ofsted, teaching unions and academy trusts with the aim of creating “a shared vision” ensuring that “every teacher, at every stage of their career, is supported and encouraged to not just stay in teaching, but to thrive” (Department for Education, 2019b, p.35).

Four key strategy priorities were identified, three of which were focused on additional training for teachers – better ITT; the introduction of the ECF (adding an additional training year); and the introduction of new reformed National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). These priorities are in line with the policy documentation from 2010 onwards, focusing on better training for teachers. The ECF was cited as “the most significant reform to teaching in a generation” (Department for Education, 2019b, p.6) with the main changes being a “step change in support and training – including a trained mentor” (p.20) and “fully funded mentor training” (p.21). The focus on developing mentors links back to Carter’s recommendations for reforms to ITT (Department for Education, 2015) and the Mentor Standards (Department for Education, 2016a).

The history of the development of instructional coaching from 2010 in policy and now, in 2025 in practice, suggests a clear narrative around teacher training:

- Better trained teachers lead to higher student outcomes
- Teaching is a craft with techniques that can be learnt from expert observation
- Teaching needs a shared understanding of ‘what works’ and this does not need to come from universities; it needs to come from teacher educator reformers, working in the field
- There is much to be learn about training teachers from other sectors and countries
- Mentoring and one-to-one support for teachers is important
- Any reforms need to be quickly scalable and universalised to ensure consistency of training and support

This narrative remains regardless of who the policy actors are, and this narrative reinforces my proposed assumptions about new teachers in the training process (pp. 25-31 of this chapter). Policy technologies work to disseminate the power to a plethora of well-networked organisations and

individuals who drive the narrative, alongside their government supporters and the targets they provide. Wilkins et al. (2020) argue that these policy actors are not acting truly autonomously:

The concept of autonomy – frequently articulated as giving power to those who know best – is a central element of neoliberal approaches to school system reform. It is, however, a highly contingent, regulated autonomy, liable to being withdrawn if performance targets are not met (p.28).

The narrative and the assumptions, created within and by a performative culture, have provided a space for instructional coaching to be ‘rolled out’ across schools and training providers in England. The new teacher remains passive in the history of these developments in teacher training and their part in it continues to be assumed until we better understand their individual experience, which is what this thesis aims to do.

Three Conflicts in the Teacher Experience of Instructional Coaching

In this chapter thus far, I formulated three assumptions made about the new teacher, drawing on a selection of Foucault’s ideas around power (1973, 1988). I exemplified these assumptions through providing a history of how instructional coaching has developed as a practice in English teacher training. My aim, in tracking the history, was to start to draw out some of the conflicts and problems associated with the new teacher’s experience of instructional coaching. In this section, I draw out three conflicts and the key literature linked to these conflicts. Better understanding the conflicts, and the literature surrounding them, will help me to better analyse and understand the teacher’s experience of instructional coaching.

The identification of three conflicts is informed by Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) collated studies of the “micro-dynamics” (p.14) of trust relations between individuals in schools. They discuss trust relations on three levels: “intrapersonal, interpersonal and organisational” (p.22). Similarly, teacher experience of instructional coaching can be looked at on these three levels and I link these levels to the three key conflicts associated with the teacher experience of instructional coaching. In the next section, I will link the conflicts with key literature and how looking at the teacher experience of instructional coaching on three levels led to my three research questions for this study (summarised in Table 1).

Relations on three levels (Bryk and Schneider, 2022)	Conflicts	Key Subjects in the Literature	Research Questions
Intrapersonal	Coaching requires individual compliance and agency	Teacher professional identity Teacher agency	How do new teachers experience agency and professional identity development in instructional coaching?
Interpersonal	Coaching relationships are trusting and hierarchical	Teacher collegial relations Teacher mentoring	How do new teachers experience the relationship with their instructional coach ?
Organisational	Coaching processes are universal and individual	Teachers and policy reform Hierarchies and heterarchies	How do new teachers experience the instructional coaching process , in the context of local and national teacher training reforms?

Table 1: Key Conflicts and Research Questions

Coaching Requires Compliance and Agency: New Teacher Agency and Professional Identity Development

New Teacher Agency

By exploring Foucault's ideas on power and Ball's interpretations of these ideas, alongside the history of the development of instructional coaching in England, I have suggested that new teacher compliance is important to policymakers and leaders when rolling out new initiatives and practices (Sachs, 2001). However, in contrast to the need for compliance, the literature also agrees that teacher agency is crucial to successful teacher training and development, and that beginning teaching is an important time for teacher agency development (Day, 2002; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011). As Tao and Gao summarise: "teacher agency plays a critical role in sustaining teachers' professional development" (p.346).

Agency is a contested and elusive term in the social sciences (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Wareen & Ward, 2022). Priestley et al. (2015) summarise that:

The distinction between agency as variable, agency as capacity and agency as phenomenon is an important distinction that is often overlooked in the literature, resulting in misunderstanding and miscommunication" (p.20).

There is a longstanding debate around the construct of agency, which can be summarised as the 'structure versus agency' debate (Warren & Ward, 2022). The tension is between how an individual chooses to act and the structural forces – the persistent norms, patterns, systems and institutions - that influence those choices:

Agency cannot be divorced from structural factors, given that agency is shaped and constrained by the structures in question (Eteläpelto et al., 2013, p.48).

A neoliberal view of agency could be seen to dismiss the structural factors and focus on the individual as the holder of agency – they are “self-directing, self-regulating, self-determined, autonomous, accountable” (Miller, 2016). In contrast, a sociocultural view of agency recognises that human agency is shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which the individual acts. This view therefore recognises the influence of structural inequalities on individual’s agency (Lasky, 2005; Solari & Ortega, 2016). A sociocultural view suggests a need to consider agency not just as an individual’s capacity to act but their capacity to act within a particular context.

Agency is prevalent to research into educational change and teacher development, and therefore this thesis, because it influences teacher and leader implementation of government policies (Tao and Gao, 2017). Earlier in this chapter, I proposed the first of three assumptions made about teachers’ professional development in a performative culture, and in the wide-spread introduction of instructional coaching: the assumption that teachers are passive subjects. I noted the issue of whether a person ever truly acts with agency, when they are “shot through with modern technologies of power” (Elliott, 2014, p.109). I highlighted instructional coaching’s development in English teacher education policy and practice, with the aim of building a picture of the structural elements surrounding and influencing the new teacher’s agency.

In this thesis, the term ‘agency’ describes an individual new teacher’s power to act within a particular context. Aligning with a sociocultural view of agency, I recognise that action takes place within structures and so actions cannot be viewed in isolation from those structures. Also drawing on Priestley et al.’s (2015) ecological approach to defining agency, I acknowledge the “importance of both individual capacity and contextual dimensions in shaping agency” (p.19).

I argue that new teacher agency is diminished in a performative culture when actions are moulded in line with a goal that is set by those in power. Wilkins et al., (2011) summarise:

Performative discourses can be construed as denying personal agency through their emphasis on instrumentality” (p.68).

In their research into teacher agency in schools, Priestley et al. (2015) found that, in a performative culture, even when agency was seen as a desirable quality, their participants “seemed more likely to go with the flow, even when they were clearly dissatisfied with this” (p.125). Likewise, Biesta (2009) states that, when teachers are faced with a policy that appeals to ‘what works’ and the science of learning, some might argue that teachers do not need to make any judgements or show any agency at all: “they should simply put into practice the strategies and teaching scripts that research has proven to be the ones that work” (p.185). Instructional coaching can be seen as one of these strategies or scripts birthed from policies that “limit the scope of teachers’ professional agency” (p.184).

New Teacher Agency and Professional Identity Development

The terms ‘agency’ and ‘identity’ are inextricably linked in the teacher development literature; new teachers develop their professional identities alongside their agency (Clarke, 2009; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Buchanan, 2015; Tao & Gao, 2017). Though agency and identity should not be conflated, their co-constitutive nature means they often appear side-by-side this thesis.

Warren and Ward (2022) summarise that:

a growing body of literature on teachers’ agency seeks to discern the ways in which agency is structurally shaped, for example, by the spatial dimension (e.g. the ongoing context), as well as the temporal one (e.g. teachers’ prior experiences, orientation towards the future) (p.541).

Teacher professional identity could be seen to fall into the “temporal” dimension, as it evolves and shifts over time. Flores and Day (2006) define a teacher’s professional identity development as:

An ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one’s own values and experiences (p.220).

In this thesis, I focus on a new teachers’ *professional* identity development. A new teacher’s experiences, including those gained outside teaching, informs the development of their professional identity (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011).

The emergence of new teacher agency can be seen as the “outward expression of one’s identity and an influence in the ongoing shaping of an identity” (p.8). A new teacher’s developing professional identity informs their actions; they take actions which align with their “understanding of who they are within their school or professional context” (Buchanan, 2015, p.704). However, as discussed above, these actions are not just informed by the new teacher’s burgeoning professional identity but

also influenced and constrained by structural and social conditions – affecting the new teacher’s agentive power. Earlier in this chapter, I referred to Foucault’s (1973, 1988) ideas on power to discuss how power flows from those in power, notably policy makers, to new teachers. Zembylas (2005) states that:

Foucauldian theory tells us that teacher identity is produced and constrained through disciplinary power and local emotional rules (p.946).

I argue that gency is the power new teachers have over the development of their professional identity and the power they have within the experiences that inform the development of their professional identity. This power includes their “their (un)willingness to act in particular ways” (Kelchtermans, 2019, p.88). For example, a new teacher’s agency could affect their engagement with a training method, such as instructional coaching. New teachers working under new policy initiatives (such as instructional coaching) in a performative culture can be seen to have constraints on their agency, and thus their professional identity development. But, during the early stages of their careers, new teachers’ agency and professional identity development could be seen as more important than at other points in their careers (Sullivan et al., 2020; Wilkins et al., 2011).

There is a key conflict to consider when looking at teacher professional identity development in instructional coaching: implicit in one-to-one coaching is the importance of the individual – they are the focus of the coaching; however, this conflicts with the need to standardise and increase the efficiency of methods. The need for standardisation and increased performance, can shift the focus from the complexities of understanding the individual in the instructional coaching process, to measuring and recording their actions and outputs (Wilkins et al., 2011; Fox, 2020; Sachs, 2001; Reeves, 2018; Clarke, 2009). Wilkins and Wood (2009) summarise this conflict:

The pressure for compliance [...]is inimical with the traditional values of critical engagement and the exercising of professional independence (p.293)

The irony of this conflict is that, in ignoring a teacher’s individual professional identity development in the instructional coaching process, performance may decrease (McNally et al., 2008).

Teachers’ professional identities shift when they enter teacher training (McNally et al., 2008) and develop throughout their careers. Their past experiences influence how they learn and develop as teachers (Hargreaves, 1992; McNally et al., 2008; Day et al., 2006). As new teachers, their professional identity development will be particularly affected by their school and wider context (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011; McNally et al., 2008; Czerniawski, 2009). The literature relating to the influence of the school and policy context will be discussed later in this chapter.

Pierce (2007) uses the term “liminality” to describe how a teacher transitions into teaching and the impact it has on their professional identity: “the rite of passage known as beginning teaching involves the suspension, even temporary loss, of professional identity” (p.31). She compares beginning teaching to puberty, in which an individual moves from one period of their lives to another.

McNally et al. (2008), when discussing the shifts in teacher professional identity during their induction period (the second year of teacher training), do not see new teachers’ professional identities as a hinterland between two stages but rather an extension of the teacher’s professional identity prior to starting to teach. They state that teacher professional identities develop through relationships with others, rather than relationships to policy (p.290). In line with the arguments presented in this thesis, they argue that teachers bring their unique identities into teaching and that these “individual experiences, qualities and capacities [...] enable them to perform”. These individual experiences need to be better understood so that they can teach, “drawing on the existing capacity and personal qualities” (p.291).

What is being suggested is that professional identity is not created by, and new teachers do not define themselves by, the progression through a set of standards. Instead, their professional identity shifts, in relation to the professional identity they hold coming into teaching, as opposed to being recreated on entry. This thinking presents a more active teacher subject who understands themselves and what they bring into teaching. In a performative culture, there may be pressures on teachers not to build on their existing professional identities, especially if those clash with the ideals of an industrious, neo-liberal worker.

Fox (2020) warns that new teachers, working in a performative culture, may become “willing performers who are unaware of the autonomy or identities they might have had” (p.49). Similarly, Sachs (2001) writes about ““designer teachers’ who demonstrate compliance to policy imperatives and perform at high levels of efficiency and effectiveness” (p.156) and Wilkins et al. (2011) argue that performative cultures “homogenise teachers”. They state that such cultures could encourage the “denying [of] personal agency through their emphasis on instrumentality” (p.68). As discussed earlier in the chapter, technologies of self (Foucault, 1988, pp.16-49) working through new teachers, could closely align the values of those in power with those of the teacher; the teacher appears to be acting with agency when, in fact, they are being controlled. Foucault’s ideas limit teacher agency and suggest that no act can show true agency as it will always be imbued with the wants and needs of those in power. For Foucault (1988), there is possibly no conflict between compliance and agency

because, even when teachers are seemingly showing agency, they are actually being compliant.

Zembylas (2005) states:

Foucauldian theory tells us that teacher identity is produced and constrained through disciplinary power and local emotional rules (p.946).

Applying this interpretation, both teacher professional identity and agency are governed by structural powers outside of themselves.

Priestley et al. (2015) present three dimensions that impact on teacher agency (the “capacity to act”), the first being “iterational” which includes the range of experiences and histories of the teacher and how they apply these to their teaching (p.31). They suggest that those with experience of working in other professions may have more capacity to apply their past experiences to teaching (p.32). More extensive professional experience would make career changers into teaching potentially more agentive on entry into teaching. Dawborn-Gundland et al. (2025), in their study of career changers into teaching, found that they participated in a “reimagining of their previous professional self” (p.3), suggesting that career changers bring their past professional identities into teaching.

Alongside experiences during, and prior to, teaching, professional identity development could be affected by socially constructed aspects of identity, notably gender. In this thesis, I agree with Francis’ (2008) summary that: “differences in behaviour according to sex/gender identification are a social, rather than biologically driven, phenomenon” (p.212). Like teachers’ social construction of the phenomenon of instructional coaching, research confirms that new teachers also construct their understanding of gender alongside their professional identity and agency development (Skelton, 2007). They construct their gender socially, within a particular context. For example, when discussing the developing professional identities of male primary school teachers, Skelton (2007) writes that “some men teachers do have to focus on their gender because it is constantly being attended to by others” (p.384). This led to the male teachers in studies by Eldred et al. (2022) and Haase (2008) conforming to, and reinforcing, masculine stereotypes, such as a liking of discipline and sports and having a good sense of humour. How new teachers experience their gender in relation to their experiences of instructional coaching, and how these experiences informed their developing professional identities and agencies, will be of interest in this study.

Yang (2024) concluded from a small-scale study of male primary school teachers in China, that “Gender and teacher professional identity are both heavily embedded in culture and context” (p.669). The context in which the instructional coaching takes place will be discussed later in this chapter. The complexities of past experiences and gender construction and their influence on new

teacher professional identity development, makes professional identity development “difficult to articulate and explore” (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011, p.763). However, as Braun (2011) argues:

Teacher education can ill afford to ignore the complexity of gendered dynamics in schools and the need for student teachers to negotiate and, if necessary, question and challenge these (p.290).

Past experiences and identities could affect a new teacher’s developing professional identity and their capacity for agency, but these past experiences and identities could remain hidden and untapped if the new teacher or their mentor does not recognise these experiences as important. They could also remain hidden if the teacher is in a context in which there is little use for their past experiences as their practice as a teacher is separated from them and technicalised and audited in a performative culture. Wilkins et al. (2020) argue that the “performative apparatus” – the targets and outcomes that are set for teachers – “negate the need for teachers themselves to draw on situated learning and their professional self to develop a rationale for actions; the target is the rationale” (p.32).

A new teacher’s understanding of their shifting professional identity could be seen as futile in a context where their developing professional identity and agency is not seen as relevant to their progress against agreed targets. However, as Hargreaves (1992) argues, “attempts at teacher development and educational change will meet with little success [...] unless they acknowledge the person that the teacher is” (p.236). This conflict between the teacher being agentic and being compliant led me to my first research question: *How do new teachers experience agency and professional identity development in instructional coaching?*

The teacher’s professional identity and agency development need to be acknowledged in their experience of instructional coaching, but they do not develop their professional identity and agency in isolation. McNally et al. (2008) state that:

New teachers find their sense of their ‘new’ professional selves through their developing relationships with colleagues (p.290).

The coach plays an important role in the new teacher’s developing professional identity and agency (Devos, 2010; Cameron and Grant, 2017). Juutilainen et al. (2024) state that new teachers’ identity and agency is “constantly negotiated in and through relationships (p.179). However, in a recent study into coaches’ perceptions of their roles in instructional coaching relationships with Early Career Teachers (ECTs), Daly et al., (2023) found that the “mass adoption of instructional coaching at scale reveals vulnerability to surface adoption” (p.361). They identified the risk of “adopting over-simplified or restricted instructional coaching practices” (p.363). In a performative culture, the coach

could be incentivised to “win compliance” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p.31) with the coaching process, rather than help to develop agency in the teacher, and this would lead to ‘surface adoption’ of instructional coaching as a teacher development tool. Ball (2013a) warns that:

Social ties within educational work become ephemeral, disposable, serial, fleeting (p.138) [if] the individual, the institution, our social relations become modelled on, microcosms of, the business (p.132).

The next part of this chapter discusses the literature surrounding the teacher’s social ties in their relationship with their coach and the potential conflicts and complexities in the teacher’s experience of this relationship.

Coaching Relationships are Trusting and Hierarchical: New Teacher Collegial Relationships

From chapter 4 onwards, for clarity, I use the term ‘coach’ as, in instructional coaching relationships in English teacher training, the coach and the mentor are usually the same person. However, in chapters 1-3, I will use the term ‘mentor’ when referring to the literature relating to mentoring and when labelling the statutory in-school support role allocated to the new teacher. I use ‘coach’ when referring to the literature relating to coaching and to label the person who provides the coaching to a new teacher.

The need to define ‘mentor’ and ‘coach’ exemplifies that the mentor has many roles in relation to the new teacher (Kemmis et al., 2014). The literature highlights that the mentor needs to strike a balance between roles. Saclarides and Gillespie (2024) state that the coaching role alone creates challenges for the mentor:

A challenging tension for a coach who must balance competing roles of being a knowledgeable expert and a responsive colleague (p.2).

The literature warns that, in a performative culture, there is a danger of the “emotional dimension” (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2000, p.53) of the mentoring role being lost and being replaced with “transmissive mentoring interactions” (Burger, 2023, p.108); “mentoring as supervision” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p.162); or mentors taking a “bureaucratic- managerial approach” (Dymoke and Harrison, 2006, p.84). Maloch et al. (2025) summarise that:

When mentors position themselves as supervisors, they become agents of the system, and [teachers] are supported for system compliance (p.2).

The conflict between the teacher developing agency and compliance in the instructional coaching process was discussed above and the coach is influential in managing that conflict with the new teacher. This part of the chapter focuses on the conflict between the coaching relationship being both trusting and hierarchical. Throughout the literature, researchers refer to this conflict but using

different terms. For example, Rippon and Martin (2003) identify that mentoring is a balance between the procedural and the interpersonal roles:

Continuity and consistency can flourish where the procedural and power dimensions are countered by positive interpersonal relationships (p.218).

Anderson et al. (2014) explore the relationships between science teachers coaching each other to implement techniques in the classroom and found that roles were important in the coaching relationship. They used the term “role synchrony” to describe “ongoing adjustments made by teachers and coaches in order to align themselves to one another’s expectations” (p.13) in which the coach needs to flex continuously to find the “middle ground” between “teacher” (supporting and advocating) and “administrator” (prescribing and evaluating) (p.14). The focus is on the coach to be active in presenting the appropriate role to the teacher and then the teacher’s role adjusts accordingly. Thus, the authors describe coaches as the “trust builders” (p.15). They need to not only build the teacher’s trust in them as a teacher and a coach but also build teacher trust in the coaching process, and the organisation in which the coaching is being implemented. The teacher’s role being dependent on how the coach presents their role points to the potential passivity of the new teacher’s role in the coaching relationship. It also highlights how complex and challenging it is for both teacher and coach to create an equitable space for the critique of practice, separate from a judgement of competence.

Lowenhaupt et al. (2014) in their study of instructional coaching relationships, through analysing the experience of coaches, found that trust-building often took place through the other roles that a coach held in relation to the teacher:

Establishing a receptive culture and professional relationships with teachers is a complex time-consuming task, which often takes time away from the official activities associated with coaching (p.754).

But their participants found that this time was well-used and benefited the instructional coaching conversation. Conversely, Hunt and Hunt and Handsfield (2013) argued, in their study of the experiences of literacy coaches in the US, that:

Coaches bring multiple identities and positions with them to any interaction, and they cannot simply take up different roles as if they were donning a mask (p.53).

This interpretation suggests something disingenuous in mentors swapping between roles. These roles, and their associated “masks”, could create a barrier between mentor (acting as coach) and

teacher. It also places pressure on the coach to build trusting relationships “despite institutional and relational barriers” (p.70). The multiple roles identified by the coaches studied presented a conflict between the need to build trusting relationships and the need to demonstrate expertise. Despite these conflicts, the coaches talked of positive relationships with teachers. Again, the story that is missing is that of the teachers who are being coached. If the coach finds it challenging going between roles, and sees an impact on trust-building, then the teacher may feel that challenge too, as they try to decipher how they respond to the differing ‘masks’ presented in the differing interactions with their mentor.

There also needs to be an acknowledgement that the numerous roles of the mentor and the coaching relationship exist within certain power relations between mentor and teacher. These power relations can affect the trust in the relationship (Maué et al., 2024). Bryk and Schneider (2002) state that trust cannot be present without vulnerability and that “this vulnerability is particularly salient in the context of asymmetrical power relations” (p.20). When applied to instructional coaching, they argue, like Tschannen-Moran (2014), that the “superordinate party” needs to recognise this vulnerability and commit to relieving the “uncertainty and unease” (Bryk and Schneider, 2002, p.20). Their theory states that members in a relationship are constantly assessing each other’s intentions and these judgements are:

Grounded in each individual’s historical perspective on the institution, personal and cultural beliefs rooted in his or her family and community of origin, and prior workplace socialisation experiences (p.22).

If the coach is responsible for relieving uncertainty and initiating trust, then they would need to understand the intrapersonal – what is influencing the teacher’s judgements on their intentions and therefore what is affecting their trust. As discussed above, they may need to understand the complexities of how an individual’s professional identity is affected by beginning teaching (Daly et al., 2023).

What appears undisputed in the literature is that productive collegial relationships in schools are important and that, in these relationships, trust is key (Atteberry and Bryk, 2011; Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Creasey and Paterson, 2005; CUREE, 2005; Heineke, 2013; Knight, 2019; Kraft et al., 2018; Nieuwerburgh and Passmore, 2012; Zugelder, 2019). There is the need for a “dialogical space in which the teacher feels safe in expressing her views” (Haneda et al., 2016, p.61).

Tschannen-Moran (2014), when writing about the pivotal importance of trust in schools, states that:

Trust is manifest in situations where we must rely on the competence of others and their willingness to look after that which is precious to us (p.17).

Trust involves reliance and, when applied to an instructional coaching relationship, the teacher is reliant on their coach to look after their development as a teacher and their gaining of a qualification. Tschannen-Moran (2014) argues, from her research, that trust requires not just reliance from one party, but from both; it requires “interdependence” (p.19). The level of interdependence, in an instructional coaching relationship, will depend on the individual relationship, but it could be seen that the coach’s success, measured in terms of the teacher’s performance in the classroom, is also dependent on the teacher. However, where “one has complete control over the actions of another” (p.20), no trust is required as there is no interdependence. There is a question around whether instructional coaching does require trust from the teacher. As a mandatory form of professional development, prescribed by their training provider and enacted by their coach, the teacher’s participation in instructional coaching may not require trust for the coaching to be enacted.

If it is assumed that the coach and teacher are interdependent and, therefore, must trust each other, it could follow that they both have a role to play in building trust in the relationship through showing the five “facets” defined in Tschannen-Moran’s (2014) theory: “benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence”. She writes that:

Within [an] asymmetrical relationship, it is the responsibility of the person with greater power to take the initiative to build and sustain trusting relationships (p.41).

I would argue that the relationship between coach and teacher is asymmetrical, but it is still interdependent by Tschannen-Moran’s (2014) definition, which makes me question whether the responsibility for initiating trust-building does lie solely with the coach and why that responsibility would not also lie with the teacher.

Tschannen-Moran (2014) acknowledges that, in schools:

Organisation dynamics often complicate things because of the power differences imposed by hierarchical relationships and complexity of interpersonal interactions (p.19).

Coaching relationships are complex and better understanding that complexity, through better understanding how the teacher experiences it, would add to an understanding of how trust is built in these relationships. The role and experience of the teacher would then not have to be assumed by leaders.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) argued that “relational trust” (p.19) is needed as their definitions of “organic trust” (p.17) and “contractual trust” (p.18) do not apply to the interactions in schools. The definitions of these latter two types of trust are interesting to explore when applied to instructional coaching. A teacher would show organic trust when they believed that the process of instructional coaching was ‘right’ and this was reinforced by the teacher’s belief in the moral character of their mentor and other leaders. However, linking back to Foucault’s (1988) technologies of the self (pp.16-49), the teacher may appear to organically trust their coach, when in fact they were just “willing performers” (Fox, 2020, p.49) in the process. If a new teacher had not experienced other methods of teacher development, other than instructional coaching, and instructional coaching aligns with the teacher’s beliefs, then they may, organically, trust the coach, the process and leadership.

Instructional coaching could also provide “contractual trust: [...] the use of established processes to affect some desired outcomes” (p.18). This definition chimes with instructional coaching due to the continuous setting of goals, followed by checking that they have been achieved in the classroom. If the teacher fails to put a particular agreed technique in place in their classroom, the contract between teacher and coach, but also teacher and training provider, could be broken. For example, in ITT, the coach plays a role in contributing evidence for the teacher to achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and so, if the teacher does not hold up their side of the ‘contract’ then the coach does not need to hold up theirs. Instructional coaching does have an element of “procedural specificity” (p.18) and so teachers could also experience something closer to the fulfilling of a contract. The instructional coaching relationship, therefore, could work on a procedural, rather than a collegial, level.

Hargreaves and Dawes (1990) wrote of the dangers of the “contrived collegiality” in the technical coaching relationship. Technical coaching to Hargreaves and Dawes (1990) is comparable to the instructional coaching that forms the basis of this study; the difference being that the research was based on technical coaching as part of ongoing in-service training for teachers, as opposed to an element of the teacher training curriculum. The dangers of this type of “contrived collegiality” are cited as follows:

These kinds of intervention foster training at the expense of education, dispositional adjustment at the expense of rational reflection, contrived collegiality at the expense of collaborative culture (p.239).

The authors note that they are not opposed to coaching as a form of professional development but rather criticise the wholesale adoption of non-voluntary technical coaching as the main element of a teacher’s developmental diet. The fear is that coaching of this kind can be used by those in power as

a form of administrative control. Within a technical coaching relationship, teachers, especially those who are labelled, or label themselves, as 'novices', are not given space to question the process. They are also not given the space in the process to question the reasoning behind the techniques they are being asked to implement in their classrooms; the technical coaching process itself; and the wider debate around the technicalisation of teaching. The writers argue that this type of coaching actively diminishes trusting relationships between teachers.

Almost thirty years later, reflecting on his research into teacher collaboration, Hargreaves (2019) concludes that:

Building collaborative cultures in education will make it more likely that all policies, other than truly cynical ones that have no intention of improving teaching and learning at all, will have a greater chance of being implemented over time (p.618).

When we apply this view to the current use of instructional coaching as a tool to improve professional development, specifically ITT in England, the practice could be seen to provide the starting point for collaboration in schools. Though Hargreaves (2019) might still argue that instructional coaching is not true collaboration, it could be argued that starting a teacher's career with regular time allocated to one-to-one developmental meetings could set the scene for less 'contrived' collegiality. When writing about Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Hargreaves (2019) states that:

There is a line between where a PLC stops being a formal set of meetings and turns into a genuine culture of collaborative enquiry where activities become persuasive and embedded (p.615).

It may be not too much of a leap to suggest that instructional coaching is not just developing a teacher's teaching but also their skills in collaboration and building collegial relations. However, if a new teacher, from the start of their career, sees instructional coaching as the only form of collaboration, and if their experience is negative, it might deter them from future, more positive collaborations.

Little (1982) interviewed 105 teachers in four schools to identify the conditions for successful collegial interactions. She identified four interactions that achieved continuous professional development, three of which were: "Teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly precise talk about teaching practice [...] Teachers are frequently observed and provided with useful (if potentially frightening) critiques of their teaching [...] Teachers teach each other the practice of teaching" (p.331). These interactions, which Little (1982) terms the "critical practices of adaptability"

(p.332) seem to be covered under what new teachers could experience in instructional coaching. From her analysis, she concluded that interactions that had a focus on practice, where practice is separated from a teacher's competence, helped to "preserve self-respect and eliminate barriers to discussion" (p.334). This links to my assumptions, proposed earlier in the chapter, that the teacher can be separated from their practice. It is also reminiscent of Foucault's (1973) clinic in which the doctor treats the ailment and not the patient. However, in Little's (1982) study, the separation of teacher and practice served to protect the teacher from personal critique.

Being aware of the fine line between practice and competence was key to these interactions and this line became finer when there was a greater perceived need to focus on a teacher's practice. The role of the mentor in judging competence upped the "risk" (p.335) on behalf of the teacher, especially when there are sanctions for non-participation in the professional development interaction with their mentor. As the mentor plays a part in providing evidence to assess the new teacher's competence, making a clear distinction between practice and competence may be even more of a challenge.

Little (1982) also identified the importance of reciprocity in a one-to-one developmental interaction between teachers. She defines reciprocity as:

Equality of efforts by the parties involved [...] equal humanity in the face of the complexity of the task, and of the limits of one's own understanding (p.335).

This definition hints that the teacher has as important a role as the coach in what they metaphorically bring to the table of a coaching interaction. The last of Little's (1982) findings that are of interest to this study is the importance of coaches playing a role: "playing teacher to students is different from playing teacher to teacher" (p.337). The importance of roles in the instructional coaching may therefore be important so that the coach does not interact as a teacher and the trainee teacher does not interact as a student. Reciprocity may aid the awareness of the dangers of crossing the line between critiquing practices and judging competence, highlighting the issues of building trust in a hierarchical relationship.

Knight and Nieuwerburgh (2012), when explaining the benefits of introducing instructional coaching to the United Kingdom (UK) education system, found that the terms 'novice' and 'expert' accentuated the hierarchy in the coaching relationship:

When leaders are positioned as experts and teachers are positioned as novices to be trained by those experts, the inherent inequality of the training relationship interferes with the likelihood that the practices will be implemented (p.103).

The authors claim that Knight's (2011) definition of instructional coaching, focused on seven "partnership principles", overcomes issues of hierarchy as it is based on "an authentic partnership between equals and not a relationship between an expert and a novice" (p.103). How this "authentic partnership" is achieved in a hierarchical relationship between a new teacher and their mentor, is not detailed by Knight (2011). His focus is on instructional coaching between peers. However, his work did influence what is now adopted as instructional coaching as a mandatory element of some teacher training curriculums in England and so it is important to understand more about how teachers experience this hierarchy, if at all. However, the literature discussed in this chapter suggests that it is challenging for a teacher-coach relationship to be truly equitable.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) state that, for a teacher development initiative, like instructional coaching,

to be successful, it will need to pay attention to power differentials and workplace inequalities, as well as individual dispositions (p.128).

These differentials cannot be ignored when analysing the teacher experience and so the hierarchy between teacher and coach needs to be explored alongside whether trust is needed for the coaching to be enacted. The literature has highlighted the complexities of the "ambivalent" (Hobson, 2009, p.315) teacher-coach relationship. How the teacher experiences this relationship will be key to this study. The conflict of the teacher-coach relationship being both trusting and hierarchical led to my second research question: *How do new teachers experience the relationship with their instructional coach?*

This relationship does not sit in isolation. As Cameron and Grant (2017) state:

Mentoring does not occur in a contextual vacuum. The setting in which the process takes place has a significant influence on that process and its outcomes (p.131).

The final part of this literature review focuses on the teacher interaction with the local and national social and political context in which the instructional coaching occurs. National contexts are important to understanding teacher experiences in their development (Czerniawski, 2011). The national context of instructional coaching was tracked and discussed earlier in this chapter, in relation to the assumptions proposed about teachers. How teachers experience the movement of power through complex policy technologies may be important to their experience of instructional coaching.

Coaching Processes are Universal and Individual: New Teachers and Education Policy Reform

The last two sections of this chapter have shown that, in the literature, a new teacher's professional identity and agency development is influenced by their relationship with their coach. It is also influenced by their relationship to the policy and school context in which the instructional coaching sits (Day et al., 2006; Day, 2002). As the literature has been explored in relation to the three assumptions proposed about teachers in a performative culture earlier in this chapter (pp.25-31), this short section will serve as a summary of that literature. The three layers of my conceptual framework (summarised in Table 1) do not sit discretely from each other but interact and highlight the complexity of the new teacher's experience in instructional coaching and the need to better understand it. A new teacher's awareness of the complexities in the relationship with their context, and the policy reform surrounding their training, may affect their experience of the coaching and how their professional identity develops (Wilkins, 2010).

I propose three assumptions made about new teachers by policy makers, inspired by Foucault and Ball's ideas. I argue that teachers are both passive and active, subject and object in relation to policy, in a performative culture. Ball (2013b) writes about the "the contradictory bases of uniformity and individuality" (p.47) in the development of educational policy, and this is the contradiction and conflict on which this section is based (though I have used the word "universal" in the title to emphasise the need for instructional coaching techniques to be used across teachers).

Kennedy (2014) labels this conflict the "dilemma" (p.691) of teacher development initiatives. Universal processes are needed, not just to serve the needs of a performative culture, but also to provide equity across support for new teachers. Earlier in this chapter, I tracked the focus on mentoring in the history of instructional coaching – this focus could be seen to increase surveillance of the mentor, and the teacher, or to increase the equity of experience across mentors and teachers.

Teachers can be seen to have the potential to be active regarding policy translation. Wilkins et al. (2011) state that "teachers are not merely passive conduits of policy" (p.68). Little (1993) argues that policy engagement should be a benchmark of effective professional development:

One test of teachers' professional development is its capacity to equip teachers individually and collectively to act as shapers, promoters, and well-informed critics of reforms (p.130).

Bryk and Schneider (2002) argue that trust in policy reform is needed if teachers are going to engage with it: "when trust is strong, individual engagement with reform does not feel like a heroic call to action" (p.33). In the last section, I discussed the literature surrounding teacher trust in their coach

and questioned whether trust was needed in the instructional coaching process. Teachers may appear to engage with reforms, but they may just be complying. The teacher may also be unable to engage and challenge reform as it undermines performativity (Wilkins and Wood, 2009) and goes against the grain of the views of others in their context.

Whether new teachers are actually engaging with policy is difficult to determine in a performative culture as they are “shot through” (Elliott, 2014, p.109) with power from above. As argued earlier, new teacher alignment with the values of policy initiatives, such as instructional coaching, mean that they could be controlled by governmentality (Ball, 2013b) and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). Instructional coaching could be seen as part of a “trope of self-improvement” (Perryman et al., 2017, p.755), which the new teachers align with. The teacher could have been made “ontologically insecure” (Ball, 2003, p.220) in a deficit culture of teacher development (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005) and feel more keenly the need to continually improve.

Yet, Ball (2013b) argues that teachers can be seen to survive, and even thrive, under policy initiatives by acquiring the skills and the language that exaggerate their performance:

There are a particular set of skills to be acquired here – skills of presentation and inflation, making the most of ourselves and making a spectacle of ourselves (p.140).

Teachers can align themselves to the “normal”, which Perryman (2006, p.159) argues is at the heart of performativity. Wilkins et al. (2020), describe these new teachers as “neo-performative” (p.35) in that they have been raised in a performative culture and know no different. These new teachers are not actually engaging with policy reform but complying with it, because this is what they are rewarded for (Kennedy, 2014).

How a new teacher engages or complies with policy will be heavily influenced by their school context (Williams and Presage, 2002), and will also influence how they comprehend instructional coaching as a teacher development tool. For example, if the teacher sits in a context in which “good teaching is a simple matter of standardized, research-based instruction, which can be verified with students' standardized exam scores” (Reeves, 2018, P.105), and they are rewarded for increased exam scores as a measure of their teaching, then they may experience instructional coaching as a means to that end. Or if the teacher trains in a context where instructional coaching is part of a drive to “engage educators in sustained, collegial efforts to practice new skills and strategies” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023, P.18) then the teacher experience may be affected accordingly. Popper-Giveon and Shayshon (2016) argue that the context, and the dominant discourses about teaching and teacher

training in those contexts, “precludes comprehension of the manner in which teachers make sense of their teaching practice and perceptions” (p.534).

The teacher experience of coaching cannot be seen as separate from their experience of the policy and school context in which it takes place, which informs my third research question: *How do new teachers experience the instructional coaching process, in the context of local and national teacher training reforms?* Placing the teacher experience of instructional coaching on three, interconnected levels in which the teacher is potentially influenced by their developing professional identity, their coach and their context helps me to better understand their experience, which is the aim of this study.

Summary

Instructional coaching, as a compulsory element of teacher training curriculums in England, was born out of a performativity culture that favoured the development of practical teaching skills, leading to raised student academic outcomes. The history of the emergence of instructional coaching in English teacher training programmes highlights the relationship between policy and practice, notably between politicians and leaders of teachers. New teachers could be seen to be passive actors in teacher development reforms through instructional coaching and, despite the absence of the teacher’s voice from the literature, the teacher’s trust in instructional coaching could be pivotal to its successful implementation.

Trust building between individual teachers, within schools, is complex, especially when the inequities are obscured and the mentor roles are varied. This thesis argues for a better understanding of the teacher experience of instructional coaching on three levels – in relation to the teacher’s developing professional identity and agency; the teacher’s relationship with their coach; and the teacher’s relationship with the school context and political climate within which instructional coaching sits. The aim is to highlight the importance of hearing the individual teacher in the instructional coaching process to emphasise their vital role as the subject of the instructional coaching, rather than the object.

As Löfgren and Karlsson (p.279) conclude from their research:

We need to listen carefully to individual’s stories about the collegial relations and the feelings involved (p.273)

and Lowenhaupt et al. (2014) state:

As policy makers and educational leaders incorporate instructional coaching into instructional improvement efforts, they must consider the everyday realities facing those in that position [...] and the interactions

and relationships (p.755).

In the next chapter, I outline my methodology and how my underlying philosophical assumptions and the ethical considerations of the research have informed my data collection and analysis methods.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research aims to understand the experiences of new teachers who have received instructional coaching from their mentor as an element of their teacher training. It aims to understand how instructional coaching is received by the teacher by seeing instructional coaching through the eyes of the teacher and gain an insight into, and highlight, the complexities of the new teachers' experiences of the instructional coaching process.

This chapter opens by presenting how this study is informed by a social constructionist view of the social world and an interpretivist view of what can be known from educational research. My view rejects a completely phenomenological or positivist approach. It is based on a view that "the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions [...] influence all aspects of research" (Arthur et al., 2012, p.17) and an understanding that my position and the assumptions on which my research is based, will "enhance [my] ability to critique [my] own research position and that of others" (p.17).

The chapter then provides an explanation of how my philosophical assumptions, ethical considerations and positionality informed my methodological choices.

Throughout this chapter, I will refer to the participants in my study as 'participants' and 'teachers' in order to align with the methodological literature that I refer to. From chapter 4 onwards, I will refer to the study participants as 'teachers'.

Philosophical Assumptions

This research primarily aims to better understand how instructional coaching is experienced by the individual new teacher. The findings from this research will be my interpretation of the experiences of the new teachers receiving the coaching. In interpreting the teachers' experiences, I am making assumptions about the social world and how truth is created within that world. I need to interrogate those assumptions and how they have informed my methodological considerations. Pring's (2009) arguments for what constitutes truth in educational research resonate with my beliefs and provide a stable base on which I build my understanding of the social world and the philosophical assumptions for my research.

Pring (2009) argues that there are "social facts" and this allows for "tentative" generalisations between individual experiences (p.118-119). This means "teachers are able to draw upon the more general bodies of knowledge which inform that practice" because they are "the best we have"

(p.119-120). My research aims to draw tentative links between the teachers' experiences, emphasising that individual teacher experience is a worthy contributor to the construction of social truth. In doing so, I wish to better understand the social facts involved in the implementation of the practice of instructional coaching in teacher training.

Pring (2009) argues for the need for forums in which "research is subject to scrutiny, in which educational practices can be questioned, and in which generalisations might be tested against [...] the experience of the teacher", even though this shared critique "goes against the grain as far as politicians are concerned" (p.119-120). My aim is to contribute to the body of knowledge which informs the practice of instructional coaching by disseminating my research through this thesis, and through teacher and leader-facing conferences and publications. As instructional coaching, as a teacher development method, is supported by current educational policy, critique of it could be going against the grain. In the final section of this chapter, this tension is discussed, considering my position in relation to my peers, who research into, and practice, instructional coaching.

The epistemological issue I face is "what is regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline" (Bryman, 2008, p.13). The "discipline" I am focusing on is education and how knowledge of instructional coaching as a practice is experienced within that discipline. I argue that instructional coaching is not just a practice, but a social phenomenon. Bryman (2008) states that "social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction, but they are in a constant state of revision" (p.19). Coaching is a developmental practice in which the coach's questions influence the teacher's responses, with the aim of positively influencing the teacher's behaviours in the classroom. The multiple definitions and varieties of practice, unified under the term 'instructional coaching' highlight the importance of understanding individuals' experiences of whichever version of coaching they received. But also that their experience of the coaching and their active role within it, shapes it as a social phenomenon. The phenomenon of instructional coaching is not just being revised by the experiences of those involved but also by educational policy, practice and research; one of my methodological challenges is whether it is important which iteration of instructional coaching my teachers have experienced and whether this influences the validity of my data. In the next section, I will raise this in relation to my participant selection.

Bryman (2008) explains that "constructionism frequently results in an interest in the representation of social phenomena" (p.20) and so, under this definition, I take a constructionist view of the phenomenon of coaching. My interest, as a researcher, is in how the phenomenon of coaching is represented in the experiences of the teachers who are taking part in the coaching. I argue that coaching, as a social phenomenon, has been constructed by the new teachers in the coaching and

that our understanding of what happens in a coaching interaction can be better understood by seeing it through the eyes of those teachers. By better understanding how those teachers experience coaching, we can better understand the social phenomenon and how it affects them.

However, I do not think that we can gain an understanding of a social phenomenon just through attempting to see it through the eyes of those experiencing it. I acknowledge that their experience is also influenced by the social and political context in which that experience happens and that this can be interpreted separately to the research subject. Crotty (1998) states that:

According to constructionism, we do not create meaning. We construct meaning. We have something to work with. What we have to work with is the world and objects in the world (p.44).

The construction of meaning will be affected by these 'objects' and these objects will sit in overlapping contexts, which will form the basis for the "everyday behaviours and practices" (American Psychological Association, 2023).

My view, therefore, is one of a social constructionist. Crotty (1998) explains that a social constructionist viewpoint argues that "we depend on culture to direct our behaviour and organise our experience...culture is the source rather than the result of human thought and behaviour" (p.53). In agreement with this explanation, I argue that teachers' behaviour within a coaching interaction is partly socially created, influenced by the structures that the interaction exists within. But I also hold that these teachers have an influence over the culture and context in which they operate, though it has not been entirely created by them. I contend that by studying the individual experience, we can better understand how a teacher's developing professional identity influences how they experience instructional coaching.

Crotty (1998) states that a social constructionist view might take the position that:

It is clearly not the case that individuals encounter phenomena in the world and make sense of them one by one. Instead, we are born into a world of meaning (p.54).

The "world of meaning" is the context that this particular iteration of coaching has been developed within. It is also the context of the teacher experiencing the coaching and anything that might influence how they experience the coaching, for example, their prior professional experiences. In chapter 2, I argued that coaching currently exists within a performative culture in English schools and teacher training and development. Pring (2009) notes that "it is a constant theme of educational 'reform' that standards are too low and [...] need to be raised" (p.157). This need for continuous

improvement is present in the political context that influences the new teacher's experience of coaching.

I wish to understand how the teacher experiences the instructional coaching interactions; how they experience the context in which they operate; and how they experience the interaction between their context and the coaching. This means that, within my constructionist view, my research choices are also influenced by an interpretivist ontological view, which seeks to "understand human behaviour as opposed to explaining it" (Bryman, 2008, p.15) through "observations of the world that provide indirect indications of phenomena" (Arthur et al., 2012, p.16). I wish to interpret the teacher's behaviours and actions from their point of view (Bryman, 2008, p.20).

I acknowledge Denzin's (1991) criticism of an interpretivist approach: the language that the teacher uses to share their experience, "which is our window into the subject's world, plays tricks" (p.68). Cohen et al., (2007) summarise that:

Interpretive approaches rely on action [...] actions are meaningful to us only in so far as we are able to ascertain the intentions of actors to share their experiences (p.21).

Actions could be used to deceive the researcher and therefore misdirect their interpretation. If, as Sabini and Silver (1998) argue, speech acts are intentional, then they can be interpreted but, if something is not spoken, then it cannot be interpreted.

The other criticism of interpretivism is that I will have an influence on the participants' actions through the research process which will impact on how their experiences are communicated. I will then take these actions and add my own interpretations to them. I will have the "power [...] to impose [my] own definitions of situations upon participants" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.25). I may seek to "understand and render more efficient a situation rather than question or transform it" (p.27).

In summary, I assert that, in this thesis, my knowledge of the social phenomenon of instructional coaching will be constructed by interpreting the experiences of the teachers involved. My constructions and interpretations are influenced by the complex contexts in which they are made. I do not believe that there are objective truths that can be discovered about social phenomenon, and I am critical of research that claims to present truths about social phenomenon, especially to gain power or to influence policy that dictates teacher practice. My philosophical assumptions directly inform my methodological choices.

Methodology

This study aims to better understand the experiences of individual teachers in the instructional coaching process, based on a philosophy that assumes my understanding of the phenomenon of instructional coaching is constructed by individual experiences of the process. My aims and underlying philosophies led me to take a qualitative approach. I will explain and justify my methodology and method choices in the next section.

Qualitative Methodology

This study takes a qualitative approach as it aims to “garner deep insights and understand complex phenomena, [...] delving into the rich textures of human experience” (Lim, 2025, p.199). My aim is to gain an insight into instructional coaching through the eyes of a certain number of the teachers who have experienced it and, in doing so, highlight the importance of the individual in a process that has been quickly formalised and replicated across English schools over the last ten years. This means that I will need to use myself, the researcher, as the main tool for data collection; I will be collecting words that will require interpretation. The data I collect will be subjective – the teachers will share their experiences in their own words. I, personally, will be immersed in the data during the analysis and this will require me to constantly reflect on my position in relation to the research, and the effect this has on the interpretation of the data and my conclusions. My positionality is discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Choosing a qualitative methodology means that the data collected is less generalisable. I will be able to make tentative generalisations across teachers’ experiences (Pring, 2009), but my research is based on the belief that the individual voice is important and that those voices sit in a life that is “complicated, contradictory and nuanced” (Hoskins, 2020, p.141). Reducing those individuals to generalisable truths is not in line with the research aims or my underlying philosophies.

Understanding that only tentative generalisation of results is possible in this research means potentially reducing the ambition for the research and therefore its reach and impact on practice in schools.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As Silverman (2001) states, the aim of a qualitative researcher is to “generate data which will give an authentic insight into people’s experiences” (p.87). In-depth one-to-one interviews are a method that allow for an insight into the teachers’ experience of instructional coaching. Critics of interviewing as a data collection tool would argue whether the data collected is authentic and participants can deceive the researcher with their words (Denzin, 1991). In this section, I will justify

why interviews were chosen as the sole data collection method and how I addressed some issues of validity and reliability of interviews through piloting.

Mears (2012), when evaluating interviews as a research method, argues that interviews allow the researcher to “learn from the qualities of experience and the significance of events or situations” (p.170) and provides a method for a researcher to “cross that boundary” into the participant’s “own personal membrane of knowing” (p.171).

The choice of interviewing as a method came with the understanding that an interview is a social interaction, which makes it complex in nature, and interviewing well is an expert skill. Cohen et al. (2007), state that an interview is a “shared, negotiated and dynamic social moment” (p.151) which highlights that the interviewer and the interviewee both bring with them “experiential and biographical baggage” (p.150) to the interview. Powney and Watts (1987) detail this ‘baggage’, including the background characteristics of the interviewer and the extensive psychological and behavioural factors. They explain how “before the first question has been put, the teachers have coloured the slate with their histories and their expectations” (p.33). Later in this chapter, I will outline the ethical considerations affected by these factors.

Due to their complexity as a social interaction, interviews present issues of validity and reliability of data (Miller and Glassner, 2004; Mears, 2012; Bryman, 2008). Powney and Watts (1987) argue that “every interview is a unique interaction however closely the interviewer tries to obey the ‘rules’ and ‘standardise’ the interview” (p.35). In the planning of my interviews, I aimed to reduce some of the inevitable variation between interviews. I completed three pilot interviews with teachers who had received some form of instructional coaching. Following reflection, I made three changes to my data collection, which aimed to increase the reliability of my data.

Firstly, following the pilot interview, the number of questions was halved (from 40 to 20). The questions were reordered, and three sections were created to help guide the teacher through the interview:

1. Gaining a shared definition for instructional coaching and understanding how instructional coaching has fitted into the teacher’s career.
2. Understanding teachers’ experiences of the separate parts of instructional coaching (agreed in the first section).
3. Clarifying and better understanding any contextual factors identified by the teacher in the first two sections and how these may have affected their experience of instructional coaching.

The three sections gave the teachers the opportunity to share their experiences generally; then share their experiences relating to specific parts of the coaching process; and then provide time for

reflection, clarification and expansion on any of the experiences shared. The pilot questions (Appendix 1) were more structured and guided the teacher in what contextual information was needed. In the re-drafted questions (Appendix 2), I gathered contextual information, (such as whether a teacher had changed careers to join teacher training), that was implied or stated during the interview; this information could then be returned to, and clarified, in the final section.

The revised, less directive, interview questions allowed me to see which contextual information the teacher deemed to be important (because that was the information they had shared without being directly asked about it) and this could then be repeated back to them and reflected upon later in the interview. A section of the pilot questions also focused on the teacher's relationship with their coach. None of the re-drafted questions asked explicitly about the coach so as not to suggest to the teacher that their relationship with their coach was an important factor in their experience. The re-draft allowed the teachers to talk about their coach as part of their experience if they wished, but not as directed by me.

Secondly, the pilot participants and their responses showed me that I needed to provide a shared definition of instructional coaching at the start of the interview. During the pilot interviews, a proportion of the interview time was spent defining what the teachers understood instructional coaching to be. Silverman (1993) states the importance of interview subjects understanding the questions in the same way where possible. Without a shared definition, it was unclear whether the teacher and I meant the same thing when we referred to 'instructional coaching', reducing the validity of whether the data could support answers to the research questions. In the redrafted interview questions, an artefact was shared at the start of the interview – a one-page overview, with diagrams, of a version of instructional coaching (Figure 1) – which allowed teachers to define the version of instructional coaching they had received in relation to that diagram.

Thirdly, the pilot guided me in participant selection choices. Given the lack of shared definition of instructional coaching, and the discovery during the interview that the teachers had not received comparable versions, teachers would be selected who had been prescribed a similar version of instructional coaching by their training providers. More detail on participant selection is given in the next section.

Participant Selection

The pilot interviews suggested that interviewing teachers who had experienced similar versions of instructional coaching would increase the validity of the research findings and allow for tentative generalisations to be made across experiences.

To gain participants, I used a convenience sampling method by contacting leaders and teachers in schools and academy trusts, in my own network, who I knew used training providers who prescribed instructional coaching as an approach. Cohen et al. (2007) note that, when using convenience sampling, the sample does not “represent any group apart from itself, it does not seek to generalise about the wider population” (p.114). However, in this case, my sampling is purposive – I am sampling from teachers who have received a particular type of instructional coaching as a compulsory element of their teacher training in English schools.

In deciding the sample size, the research aimed for:

Information-rich cases...those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 2002, p.230).

Mears (2012) states that, when using interviews as a data collection method, there are “no iron clad rules of what defines sufficient data” (p.173) but “you are required to collect sufficient data to represent the experience you are investigating, and you may stop when you reach saturation (i.e. no longer hear anything new)” (p.171). Therefore, the sample size was not decided prior to data collection but agreed once data collection had started and the quality of the data in terms of the depth of experience has been analysed. Sufficient data was agreed at 15 interviews. As I had used a convenience sampling method, the teachers only had two commonalities: they had all been prescribed a similar form of instructional coaching from their training provider, and they had been prescribed the coaching during their ITT or ECF years in England. During data analysis, information that teachers disclosed about themselves (for example, subject taught) was recorded, which I felt to be important in relation to my research questions. This data is summarised in Table 3:

Pseudonym	Stage	Career Changer	Post grad	Subject	Sporting experience	Instructional coaching as prescribed	Positive coach	Negative past coach	Whole school instructional coaching
Ava	Primary ECT2	N	N	Music	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Daisy	Primary ECT1	N	N	Unknown	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Eleanor	Secondary ECT2	Y	N	Science	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ellie	Secondary	N	N	Science	N	Y	Y	N	N
George	Secondary ECT2	Y	Y	History	Y	Y	Y	Y	N

Layla	Secondary ECT2	Y	N	Maths	N	Y	Y	N	N
Lily	Secondary ECT1	N	N	Science	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Mia	Secondary ECT2	Y	N	English	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Millie	Secondary ECT2	N	Y	Music	N	N	Y	Y	N
Noah	Secondary ECT1	Y	Y	Music	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Oliver	Secondary ECT2 + 1	Y	Y	English	N	N	Y	N	N
Olivia	Secondary ITT	Y	N	English	N	Y	Y	N	N
Oscar	Secondary ECT1	Y	Y	English	N	N	Y	Y	N
Sophia	Secondary ECT2 + 1	N	Y	History	Y	N	Y	Y	N
Theo	Primary ECT2	N	N	Sport	Y	N	Y	N	N

Table 3: Teacher Information

The details of data analysis methods are shared in the next section.

Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2017) method for thematic analysis (TA) emphasises an "organic approach to coding and theme development and the active role of the researcher in these processes" (p.279).

The aim of their version of TA is to:

Identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants' lived experience, views and perspectives (p.279).

I used their version of TA to analyse the interview data and identify themes from across the teachers' experiences of instructional coaching. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue against a "passive process of analysis" (p.80) where themes are uncovered. They highlight the active role of the researcher in the analysis and outline six steps for TA, which are not followed chronologically but gone between, back and forth, until writing is submitted. The process moves from data immersion to codes to themes. As Mears (2012) points out, interview research is characterised by "data collection blurring into data analysis" (p.173) and the first step, researcher immersion in the data, starts when the first interview is played back and transcribed.

Following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2017), I started by immersing myself in the data and generated initial codes (Table 4).

Initial Codes	
"One size fits all"	Coach buy-in
"Open door culture"	Coach individuality

"Tick box exercise"	Coach likeness
"Trust the process"	Coach reassurance
Accountability vs judgement	Coach/teacher mutual support
Adapted method	Misaligned visions
Age gap	Misunderstanding of process
Alternative method	Negotiation
Apprehension/fear at start	Never-ending steps
Being a burden	Respect for expertise
Changing attitudes	Technology facilitates
Collegial support	Technology hinders
Disenfranchise	The "s**t sandwich"
Embarrassment/awkwardness	The importance of location
External accountability	Time pressure
Fabricated/tokenistic steps	Trust
Habit forming/breaking	Unacknowledged skills/experience
Hierarchical relationships	Unnecessary repetition
Inadequacy	Workload
Inferiority	Playing a role
Injustice	Isolation/outcast
Insecurity	Lack of confidence

Table 4: Initial Codes

I then continued to go between the codes and the data to generate, review and name my themes (summarised in Figure 2). The interview transcripts were colour coded based on reviewed themes (Appendix 3).

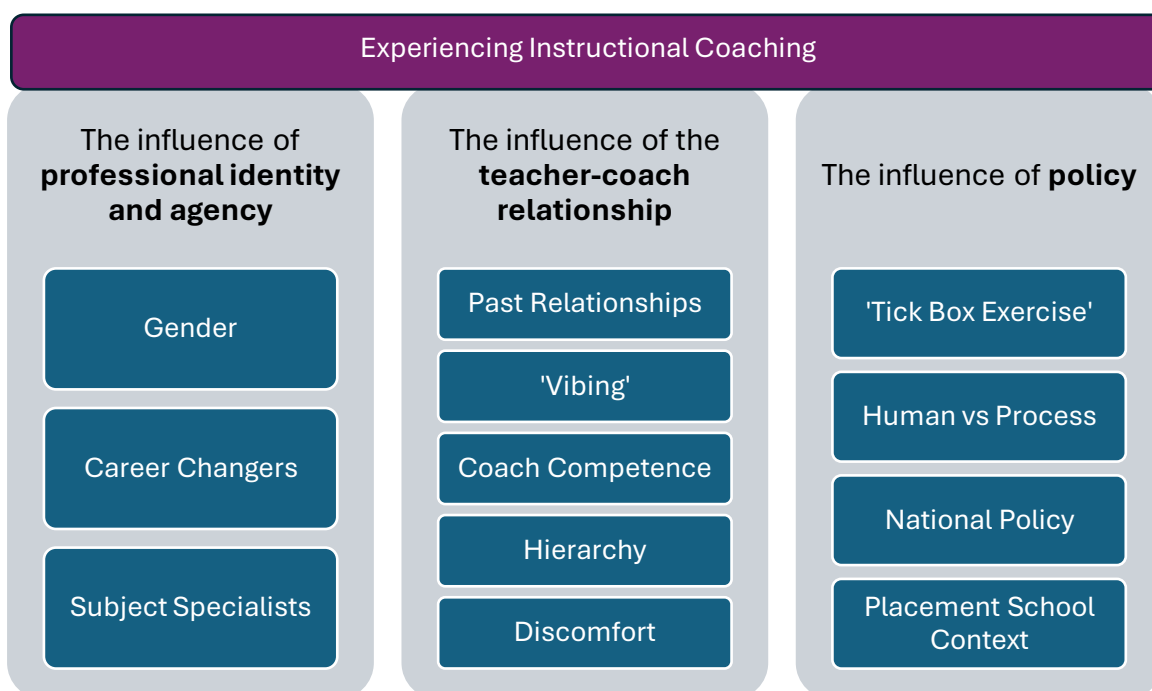


Figure 2: Factors influencing individual teacher experience and engagement in instructional coaching

The reviewing and naming of themes continued into the final analysis and thesis writing stages. According to Braun and Clarke's (2006) definitions, my analysis was "inductive" (p.83) in that the data drove the TA – there was no pre-existing coding frame or preconceptions of how the teachers would have experienced instructional coaching. However, my theoretical framework did look at teacher experience on three levels – individual professional identity; relationship with coach; and in the wider context. These three levels informed my research questions which guided my creation of the three overarching themes, seen in Figure 2. My analysis was also "semantic" (p.84) in that I did not look to analyse beyond what the teachers told me in the interviews; though I recognised the limitations of constructing meaning from others' words, as outlined in my philosophical assumptions. The study aimed to understand the teacher experiences as opposed to explain them, in line with my philosophical underpinnings:

Thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework cannot and does not seek to focus on motivation or individual psychologies, but instead seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided (p.85).

Braun and Clarke outline five pitfalls of TA: stringing related quotes together, as opposed to analysing; collating interview questions with themes; providing no depth of analysis; presenting an analysis that mismatches with, or is not supported by, the data; and presenting an analysis that mismatches with the theory on which the research is based. The primary issue being manipulating data to suit neat, pre-existing theories. Kvale (1996) warns of "transcriber selectivity" (p.163) when analysing interview data specifically. I could not remove myself from the data analysis process, but I needed to maintain a constant awareness of my biases and intentions, which may conflict with the TA process.

Ethical Considerations

Hammersley and Traianou (2012) outline five commonly recognised principles for ethical research design: *minimising harm, protecting privacy, treating people equitably, offering reciprocity and respecting autonomy* (p.2-3). In the section, I will outline how the research design, data collection and data analysis was guided by the first three of these principles, as they are most applicable to this study. I was also guided by the British Educational Research Association's guidelines (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2024) and the Information Commissioner's Office guide to UK General Data Protection Regulation (Information Commissioner's Office, 2022). My assessment of the ethical considerations was scrutinised when I gained ethical approval for the study through Brunel University Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 4). In applying for ethical approval and assessing risk of harm to participants and others, I provided pilot interview questions (Appendix 1);

the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5); a risk assessment for conducting interviews online (Appendix 6); and the participant consent form (Appendix 7).

Minimising Harm and Protecting Privacy

There is the potential that the research could cause harm to some degree to me; the participants; and members of the wider education and research community. There is no potential for physical harm to be caused by this research to any of the parties but there is potential for harm to their reputations. If the teachers could be identified from the dissemination of the research, and they were seen to be criticising their school or leaders' practice, this could lead to harmful consequences, for example, a lack of promotion opportunities or relational difficulties at work. There is also the potential that the training providers and employers of the teachers could be equally harmed if they were identifiable in the thesis. This risk was mitigated by ensuring teachers were discussed through the use of pseudonyms. As the interview and observation data was, in the first instance, collected through the Zoom platform, GDPR was covered by this platform's policies. The Zoom platform allowed me to provide the teacher with a screen pseudonym, before the interview was recorded, which then translated to the transcript and any files relating the teacher. As the data was collected in 2023, following the outbreak of Covid in 2020 and the nationwide lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, Zoom had become a safer medium for interviewing, as opposed to meeting participants face to face. Zoom also reduced research costs, through the lack of travel; increased privacy, as participants could meet from a private location of their choice; and increased convenience, as participants just needed to have access to a device and the Internet to participate.

As the research used convenience sampling (gaining participation through asking leaders in schools to send the research details to teachers who had received instructional coaching), it was essential that the teachers contacted me directly to agree to participation. This meant leaders were not aware of a teacher's participation in the research. The convenience sampling meant that no geographical area within England was targeted which, again, reduced the likelihood of teacher identification.

In gaining ethical consent for their participation in the interviews, I needed to provide the teachers with enough information about the research to make an informed judgement as to whether they wished to take part. As taking part in research may have appeared complex to the potential participant, I created a simple email introduction (Appendix 8) to accompany the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5). It also needed to be considered that the schools and academy trusts, in which the new teachers were placed, had a vested interest in the new teachers presenting their experiences of instructional coaching positively. This was one of the reasons not to use leaders as gatekeepers in the research – so that teachers could maintain anonymity, and they would not feel

that my motivations were aligned with those of their leaders. The teachers contacted me directly and voluntarily, after the initial email, and they were given the opportunity to remove their consent during the data collection period.

To reducing the risk of harm to training providers, training providers are not named in relation to individual teachers; they are only discussed more generally in the literature review to provide historical context for instructional coaching.

Treating People Equitably

I have taken a deontological approach, treating the teachers as “ends in themselves and never solely as some means to a given end.” (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2020, p.64). The new teachers were the primary subjects of my research and so my priority was ensuring that I fulfilled my responsibilities to them. I needed to be aware of the vulnerability and status of the teacher (Powney and Watts, 1987) and the “asymmetries of power” (Kvale, 1996, p.126) in the interview situation. I needed to place myself in an equitable position in relation to them. In my introductory email (Appendix 8), I introduced myself as a teacher, not a leader, in schools. I also learnt from the pilot interviews that it was important to remain silent after asking a question to allow the teacher equitable time and space in the interview to share their experiences in-depth.

I also had an awareness that, because of convenience sampling through my own networks, I had met some of my participants before. By having interview questions as guidance and a three-part structure to the interview, I aimed for equity of questioning across the interviews. Asking all participants about where instructional coaching had fit into their professional development and training, meant that I heard all of the experiences in their own words, even if some of them were familiar to me.

I had learnt from the pilot interviews to show encouragement and interest while teachers were talking but not enthusiasm when they said something that I agreed with personally. Developing this part of my interview technique minimised teachers gaining biased treatment. As discussed in previous sections, this research is built on the belief that “to want to interview without interviewer influence is a contradiction in terms” (Brenner, 1981, p.122) but attempting to influence each teacher equally during data collection and analysis was an important ethical consideration.

As BERA (2024) states:

Ethical decision-making becomes an actively deliberative, ongoing and iterative process of assessing and reassessing the situation and issues as they arise (p.8).

My judgement was continually needed to weigh up the risks against the gains from completing the research. Hammersley and Traianou (2012) summarise:

What is right and wrong in some particular situations is a matter that requires consideration of diverse and potentially conflicting considerations (p.7).

Regardless of the extent to which ethics is considered in research, “there is no way of eliminating all error” (p.7) in research that involves human interaction, especially in-depth interviews. My position as a researcher influenced my ethical decisions.

Positionality of the Researcher

A researcher’s positionality could be defined as the researcher's motives, presuppositions and personal history that influence their research (Caelli et al., 2003). It is important to account for my “embodied social location” within the research and in relation to those involved as “data is understood to be co-constructed through particular research encounters” (Brisbois and Almeida, 2017, p.198). This section will provide information about my perceived position in relation to the researched – instructional coaching as a phenomenon, and the teachers as recipients of the coaching.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) state:

The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand (p.123).

My position in this research, in relation to the development of instructional coaching in England, is that of an insider-outsider: I am an insider in the fact that my career as a teacher and a leader has developed alongside the implementation of instructional coaching into English schools. I have delivered instructional coaching to new teachers in schools and for training providers; I have helped to develop materials for use in instructional coaching; and those who have researched, practised and promoted instructional coaching have been my colleagues and peers. More recently, my research, and my affiliation with an academic institution, has provided me with the knowledge and tools to be critical of some of policies and practices that I, in the past, have held to be indisputable. I have become particularly critical of the technicalisation of teacher training at the potential detriment of social and humanistic concerns.

This means that I bring to the research certain biases but, as Thompson (2000) states:

The real aim should be to reveal sources of bias, rather than pretend

they can be nullified [...] by a distanced researcher without feelings (p.137).

My bias against the technicalisation of teaching and coaching interactions potentially pitches me as an outsider to some of my peers, who research and practice a pure, mechanised version of instructional coaching, and my position as an outsider will be reinforced when the research is published. Being aware of this outsidership, when I position myself as critical and a researcher, has influenced my criticality around instructional coaching. My position within the development of instructional coaching as a teacher development tool, means that I am also well placed to fulfil one of the aims of my research, which is to contribute to the current research base and possibly influence practice.

In relation to the research participants, I am an insider as I am a teacher who has received and provided instructional coaching. To the participants who teach in secondary school, especially those who teach English, I am a closer insider – what Banks (1998), when discussing race research, labels an “indigenous insider”:

A legitimate member of the community who has a perspective and a knowledge that will promote the well-being of the community (p.8).

The details that I shared with the participants, with regards my career and background, was a decision I made in my initial communications with them. In my initial email, I chose to tell them that I was a teacher in schools. My aim was to actively position myself as a peer but not as someone who they would recognise as above them in the familiar school hierarchy. To the teachers, as a researcher, I am also an outsider.

Most of the participants I would meet for the first time when they became research participants. I did not work in their school, trust or local authority, and this provided some distance between the participants and myself. My position as a practising teacher means that I would need to be aware of the empathy for, and bias, I would have towards teachers. I also needed to be aware that this bias would lead me to trust teachers, but I could not assume that this trust would be reciprocated by my participants. As Millner and Glassner (2004) state:

Interviewees may not trust us, they may not understand our questions, or they may purposely mislead us in their responses (p. 128).

Particularly during data collection, I maintained an awareness of the power asymmetry between me and my participants and the need to provide clarity as to my aims, questions and the dissemination of my research. Kvale (2007) presses the importance of the researcher maintaining a “qualified naivety” (p.13) during interviews - balancing the need to build trust with the participant through

showing understanding of their experiences, whilst maintaining a distance, so as not to actively bias the information shared.

Stanley and Wise (1993) note that:

Researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings, and moods. And all of those things influence how we feel and understand what is going on (p.157).

An awareness of my shifting positionality in relation to the topic of instructional coaching, and the research participants, requires constant reflection to understand the influence it had on my methodology, particularly the data analysis and presentation of findings. My positionality informed my ethical considerations (notably highlighting the possible risks of power relations embedded in the research process) and it sat upon my philosophical assumptions and informed all the decisions I made in my research design.

Summary

My research aims to understand, and highlight the importance of, individual new teacher experience of instructional coaching. As a researcher, I do not reason that there is an objective truth of these experiences to be discovered; I believe that the teacher's experience of the phenomenon of instructional coaching is constructed by the teachers and, through my research, I will interpret their experiences and construct my own knowledge of the phenomenon. The social and political context, in which the participants and I exist, will influence these constructions. I play an active role as a tool in the research, and though I cannot separate my beliefs and biases from data collection and analysis, through reflection, I can maintain a constant awareness of my position and its impact. Interviews, though presenting issues of validity and generalisability of data, provided the most appropriate tool for gaining data on individual experience. Ethical issues present themselves through the interactions between me and the teachers, during the interviews, and the representation of their experiences after the interviews. Validity can be increased through the development of interviewer expertise, and thematic analysis that focuses on creating themes that are interesting and surprising as opposed to neat and aligned.

CHAPTER 4: New Teacher Experiences of Instructional Coaching – The Influence of Professional Identity and Agency

Introduction

In the next three chapters, I present a summary of the findings from my data alongside analysis of those findings in relation to my theoretical framework presented in chapter 2.

My data analysis is separated into three sections across chapters 4-6. The three chapters analyse how the teachers' experience of instructional coaching was influenced on three levels: by their professional identity; by their relationship with their coach; and by their understanding of the policy context in which they worked. Within these levels, themes are presented to suggest the factors that influenced individual teacher experience. These factors also influenced whether the teachers engaged in the instructional coaching process as prescribed by their training provider. An overview of the themes and section headings are presented in Figure 2.

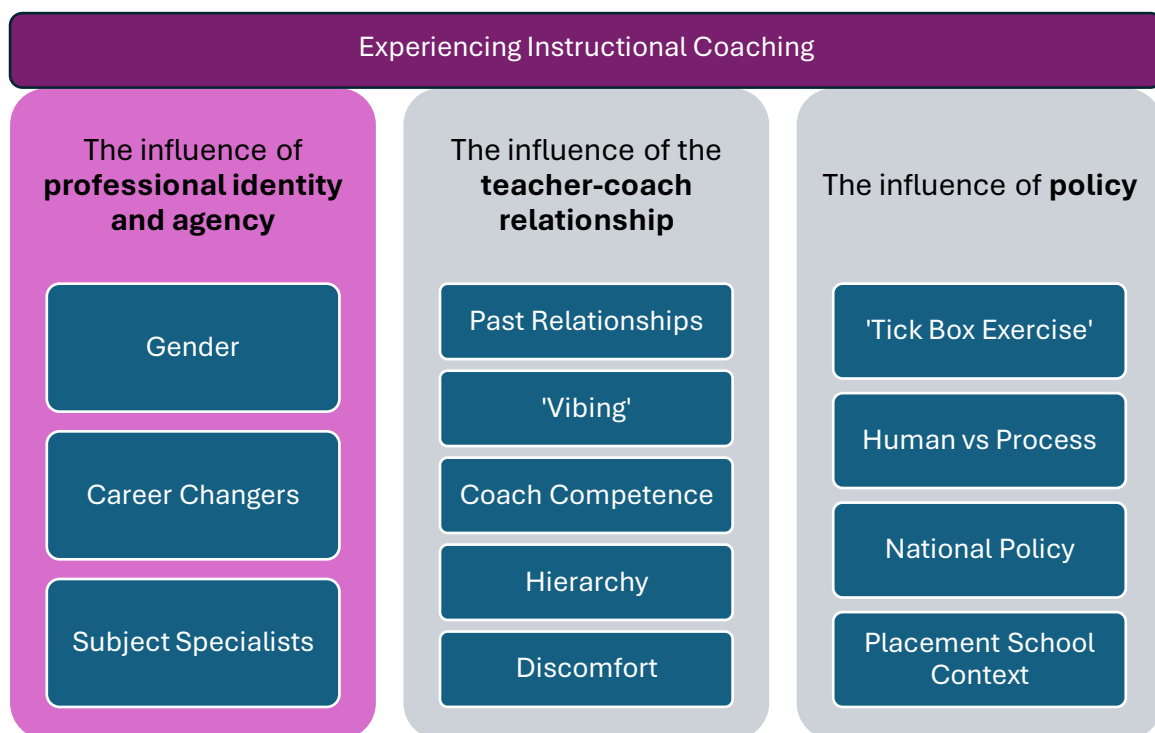


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Individual Teacher Experience and Engagement in Instructional Coaching

In line with my philosophical underpinnings, explained in chapter 3, my focus is on the importance of the role of the individual teacher in constructing the phenomenon of instructional coaching. In shedding light on individual experiences of a complex process, my aim is to come to some conclusions that would aid in the development of instructional coaching as a training method for those individuals.

I draw on data to argue that instructional coaching is a form of teacher development which has grown out of a performative culture in which teacher practice can be codified, replicated and monitored. It is a form of professional development which, according to researchers, teachers and policy makers, aligns with 'what works' when teaching teachers (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021; Sims and Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Hobbiss et al., 2021). I have presented conflicts and inconsistencies in the development of instructional coaching as a practice, and particularly its widespread 'roll out' across teacher training providers: conflict between the teacher being agentive and the teacher also being compliant; conflict between the coaches being the sole trust builders in the teacher-coach relationship, and the trust-building as reciprocal between teacher and coach in a hierarchy relationship; and conflict between meeting the needs of the individual and the need to create practices that can be monitored and replicated on a national scale.

I proposed in chapter 2 that the role of the teacher in the instructional coaching relationship is based on assumptions by policy makers and educational leaders which place teachers' practice as a problem that requires continuous solving. I also argue that the experiences of teachers in the instructional coaching process in England is a gap in the literature. If teacher experience is not researched, then it will be assumed, and this will lead to ineffective implementation of instructional coaching.

The analysis of the data presented in the next three chapters aims to highlight the complexity of individual teacher experiences of instructional coaching, whilst also drawing "tentative generalisations" (Pring, 2009, p.119) across the individual experiences to suggest the factors that have influenced their experiences and their engagement with instructional coaching.

Summary of the Instructional Coaching Received by the Teachers

I will start by providing a summary of what the teachers received in terms of instructional coaching, which will help contextualise my analysis in chapters 4-6.

10 out of the 15 teachers interviewed received instructional coaching as prescribed, or close to how it was prescribed, by their training provider. Out of these 10 teachers, three teachers found their experience to be wholly positive in terms of how it made their training more manageable (Eleanor); the logical nature of the process (Lily); and addressing "*little niggles*" in teaching practice (Mia). Three of the teachers (Daisy, Noah and Ava) found instructional coaching to be useful at the start of their training but, later on, they wanted more subject specific development that the coaching did not provide. Three teachers (George, Layla and Ellie) found the process positive predominantly due

to the adaptations made by their coaches. Olivia found the process useful to the development of her teaching, but she did not enjoy the process.

The remaining five teachers did not receive instructional coaching as prescribed. Oscar and Oliver, and their coaches, used their mentoring time for “*cerebral conversations*” (Oliver) and to “*voice our frustration [...] empathise [and] listen*” (Oscar), alongside occasional observation feedback. Oscar did not start the instructional coaching process. Oliver did start it, but he and his coach stopped when they felt they “*couldn’t talk about anything else*”. Theo and his coach did not engage in the coaching because they felt it was not needed for him; Theo thought his coach had some “*social awkwardness*” in the role. Millie received more traditional mentoring in terms of observation, feedback and discussion, as parts of the coaching felt “*silly*” and “*self-indulgent*”. Sophia started with coaching and stopped early on in her training when she felt it ceased to be useful to her teaching. All teachers continued to complete the online tasks used to track the coaching, even though they were not completing the instructional coaching.

Even though five of the teachers did not receive instructional coaching as prescribed by their training provider, their experience of why they did not receive the coaching and what they received instead of the coaching, remains important to the aims of this study. The new teacher and their coach not entirely engaging in the instructional coaching as prescribed is an interesting part of their experience; it provides insight into what influenced this lack of engagement in terms of their developing professional identities; relationships with their coaches; and their understanding of the political and social context of the coaching. It allows me to draw contrasts and “tentative generalisations” (Pring, 2009, p.119) between those teachers and coaches who did engage with the instructional coaching and those teachers who did not.

New Teacher Professional Identity and Agency Development

This chapter analyses how the new teachers experienced professional identity and agency development in, and through, the instructional coaching process. At the start of chapter 2, I used ideas from Foucault to understand how power is exerted, and moves through, new teachers during the practice of instructional coaching. I also applied Foucauldian thinking to why instructional coaching has gained such traction in teacher training curriculums in England over the past five years. Elliott’s (2014) reading of Foucault can be applied to how new teachers develop agency:

Foucault saw individualisation as a form of self-imprisonment, and because he viewed the self as shot through with modern technologies of power, he steadfastly refused to consider how individuals might reflect on social practices and, in turn, transform aspects of their lives in the process (p.109).

In contrast to Foucault's ideas that individuals are always acting, knowingly or unknowingly, under the influence of those in power, I argue that teachers are an active element in the construction of instructional coaching as a social phenomenon. Thus, they can reflect on the processes of which they are part and, in turn, exert agency over their engagement in the processes. As stated earlier in this chapter, I propose that instructional coaching is based on three assumptions about teacher development: teachers are passive subjects; their practice is a problem that can be separated from the teacher so that it can be fixed; and that teachers require constant observation to check their compliance towards the 'normal'. These assumptions sit in contrast to my argument that teachers can, and should, actively develop their professional identity and agency in the instructional coaching process.

There are constraints on new teacher professional identity and agency development in a performative culture. As stated above, the process rests on the conflict that individual teacher's professional identity and agency are important in professional development, but, in a performative culture, that can be outweighed by the need to increase their performance quickly using consistent and replicable methods. This conflict informed my first research question, which is addressed in this chapter: *How do new teachers experience agency and professional identity development in instructional coaching?*

The analysis in this chapter is divided into three sections: gender, career changers and subject specialists. The sections discuss the features that some of the teachers cited as influences upon their experience of instructional coaching. I analyse these experiences in relation to the literature on new teacher professional identity and agency development.

Gender

Two teachers spoke about how their sex, and the construction of their gender, by themselves and others, influenced their experiences of instructional coaching.

Theo, a primary school teacher, talked about how his colleagues perceived him because of his sex: *"I'm a 24-year-old male and there are certain stereotypes that come with that"*. He was *"automatically associated with being a lad"* which was at odds with his professional identity as a teacher: *"I don't think you can be a lad and be a teacher"*. He thought that being young, male and a football player meant that his older, female coach treated him differently and felt more nervous around him. He felt that she assigned him stereotypically masculine traits, such as confidence, which added to her nerves. The coach's perceptions of his gender directly influenced Theo's relationship

with her. The influence of the teacher/coach relationship on the teachers' experiences will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Woodfine and Warner (2022), in their study of professional identity in early career teachers from under-represented groups, found that young male primary school teachers coped with teacher training "on the scale between engaging in expected 'laddish' ways of being a teacher and voicing their actual views" (p.345). Theo suggested that he was seen by his coach in "socially and culturally recognised masculine roles such as the 'PE expert'" (p.346). Other studies have highlighted the experiences of male primary school teachers and the constructions of their masculinity (Eldred et al., 2022; Skelton, 2007; Martino, 2015; Johnston et al., 1999; Yang, 2024). However, Theo did not engage in stereotypically masculine 'laddish' behaviours – he saw them in contradiction to his professional identity as a teacher - but he did recognise that these were behaviours that might be expected of him because of his gender (Cousins, 2019). Though he saw the disconnect between 'lad' and 'teacher', when justifying why he had not engaged in the instructional coaching as prescribed, Theo stated: *"I am a male stereotype [...] the more you tell me, the less I want to do."* There was a clear disconnect when it came to Theo verbalising others' stereotyping of him; his stereotyping of himself; and how these stereotypes met with his developing identity as a teacher.

His experience "demonstrates the complexities of self-identification" (p.345) of young, male primary teachers and the importance of the instructional coaching process recognising the complexities associated with the professional identity development of particular groups of teachers.

Lily identified as a high achieving young female, and she asserted that these characteristics aligned her more closely with the aims of instructional coaching. She talked about her own secondary education in the competitive environment of a girls' school and how the transition from this environment to university and then to instructional coaching had been easy. She described herself as *"determined"* and a *"perfectionist"*, which she suggested increased her engagement with the coaching. She stated: *"I just need to keep getting through the steps"*; she was driven to complete the instructional coaching next *"steps"* assigned to her by her coach.

She spoke about her small school having a high percentage of young trainee teachers, straight out of university, and this meant that instructional coaching was more easily adopted. She distinguished herself from the older teachers:

"There are still some teachers here who are from the 'old school' who hate it. Instructional coaching aligns with how we're running the school now."

Hargreaves (1994) summarises teachers' work as: "overwhelmingly a process whereby supervising men manage the working lives of women" (p.104). The process of instructional coaching could be seen to supervise Lily's teaching life but she is an enthusiastic participant in this supervision. When talking about her male coach, she stated: "*he is so experienced [...] he is such an amazing coach*". Lily highlights her sex and also her age: she identifies as young, in contrast to the more resistant "*old school*" teachers, and this youth makes her a part of the "*we*" who are running the school.

Lily's need to achieve her "*steps*" is reminiscent of Olmedo et al.'s (2013) comments about the development of the Teach for All network and its part in the neoliberalisation of education. They describe neoliberalism as "the governing of society, in part, through the production of willing, 'self-governing', and enterprising subjects" (p.493). Foucault's (1988) theory of "technologies of self" (pp.16-49) suggest that, when an individual's professional identity is so closely aligned with the aims of those in power, that they do not recognise the influence of that power, then they become "self-crafting" (Perryman et al., 2017, p.754). As Sullivan et al.'s (2020) state:

By internalising discourses of conformity and compliance, individuals become complicit in governing themselves (p.391).

Lily's enthusiasm for her own development; her striving for perfection; and her desire to move through the "*steps*", meant that she thrived under instructional coaching. She associated this enthusiasm with being high achieving and female. Her experience raises questions about a teacher's intentions and agency in engaging in instructional coaching in a performative culture. Ball (2003) summarises these questions as:

Are we doing this because it is important, because we believe in it, because it is worthwhile? Or is it being done ultimately because it will be measured or compared? It will make us look good! (p.220)

It also raises questions about whether instructional coaching suits certain gender stereotypes. The neoliberal ideology on which instructional coaching is based could be seen to be particularly aligned with teachers raised in a neo-performative culture (Wilkins et al., 2020), who are praised for continuous improvement and "*getting through the steps*". Lily also saw it as aligning with high achieving, female teachers.

Lily could also be shown to exert agency in engaging with the instructional coaching – she saw the benefits to her development, and she saw alignment between the instructional coaching methods and her developing professional identity. To ignore her agency in the process and instead label her engagement as compliance would be to agree with Foucault (1988) that all individual actions are driven by "technologies of the self" (pp.16-49).

Career Changers

Alongside gender, following data analysis, I found career changers (teachers who changed careers to join teacher training) to be of particular interest in the data. Though the Department for Education's ITT Census does not track career changers into teaching, in 2022/23, 49% of trainee teachers were over 25 years old, suggesting they changed careers to enter teaching (Department for Education, 2024b). Numerous studies argue that career changers are a group that require special attention when designing teacher training curriculums (White et al., 2024, Davvand et al., 2024; Williams, 2010; Negrea, 2024; Grier and Johnston, 2009). In the next two sections, I discuss their experiences. I have separated them into those who had past careers outside of teaching, and those who has past careers within teaching, because I can make tentative generalisations across the two groups' experiences.

Teachers' Past Careers Outside of Teaching

Of the eight career changers interviewed, three had held leadership positions outside of teaching. All three teachers voiced some scepticism about the instructional coaching process, but they continued with what was prescribed by their coaches and the training provider. Their reasoning for continuing to engage positively in the coaching was different for the three teachers. However, they all cited that their past career experiences had provided them with skills that allowed to them to better engage with their teacher training, including instructional coaching.

George believed that he was able to use his past work experiences to help him navigate teacher training. He had held roles in marketing and business consultancy, and he had run his own business. Through his marketing role, he had gained an understanding of human behaviour, particularly the impact of data and research on how people take up new ideas and products. He talked about *"group think about something that sounds scientific"* and this made him *"deeply sceptical"* of the science and data used to inform education and, more specifically, teacher training methods. When training, George was able to question and engage with the research given to him, particularly around how people learn and the use of instructional coaching as a part of his training. He talked about *"data-driven targeting"* in education, which lacked the *"human aspect"* and so he stated: *"I don't want anything to do with this."*

New teachers having the tools and space to question and critique is seen as a necessary part of teacher development (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2000). George had the prior knowledge and experience to allow him to better understand why he was receiving instructional coaching, and his

past experiences made him sceptical of the method as part of a 'what works' narrative (Biesta, 2009).

Sullivan et al. (2020) found that some of the early career teachers in their study were under "pressure to accept such 'commonsense'" training methods and that they quickly lost their ability to "think and reflect critically". They therefore chose to "'fall in line' with prevailing educational orthodoxies" (pp.394-5). George does 'fall in line' with the coaching, but shows some reflection and critique, and so his engagement with the process potentially shows some agency. Even though the instructional coaching was a compulsory element of his teacher training, his past experiences gave him the confidence to resist the pressure to just accept the training methods provided and therefore influenced his engagement with instructional coaching.

Noah also applied his past experiences to how he engaged with coaching. Teaching was Noah's first employment, but he had excelled in voluntary and academic work prior to his teacher training. When joining training, and engaging in the instructional coaching process, he stated the need for "*deference*" and "*resilience*" and "*open-mindedness*", particularly during feedback. He said, "*you can't be too quick to defend yourself*" and he said that you need to believe that "*you can learn*".

In the first two years of training, he willingly accepted the methods that were decided by his training providers, including instructional coaching. He admitted that, further into his training, it became "*harder to be completely deferential*". He voiced that this was partly because of the need for more subject specific feedback as became a better teacher: "*the stand out difficulty is taking account feedback from a music point of view*".

As his confidence as a teacher grew, he stated that his conversations with his coach became less purely instructional and more of a "*back and forth*". Noah developed from "*deference*" early on in his teaching to having a more critical "*back and forth*" role in his coaching as his teaching practice developed. His initial trust in the coaching process could have been influenced by his past success as a learner in the field of music, which he felt he had gained by a deference to expert feedback.

Twisleton (2018) argues that teacher training programmes need to understand the complexity of new teacher learning and give "student teachers agency and control over their learning" (p.208). Noah's experience suggests that agency in the coaching conversations developed over time, as he gained skills as a teacher. As a learner, he deferred to the expertise of others at the beginning of his training and then he slowly gained more power in the coaching. He had learnt through his previous experiences and successes that deference was required early in the learning process, and he had brought this with him into teaching.

Noah's experience suggests that expecting new teachers to have agency over their learning right from the start of their training, as Twisleton (2018) argues, might not be realistic. To exert agency, new teachers may need more established knowledge, skills and relationships.

Buchanan (2015) argues for space to be made in teacher development curriculums for teachers to self-reflect on their shifting professional identities and their agency within the teaching profession (p.715). Noah defaults to deference at the start of his teacher training and this deference encourages engagement with the instructional coaching process. However, space is not provided for Noah to reflect on his evolving professional identity and agency within a new profession. If this space had been provided, Noah may have been able to bring more to his early coaching than just deference to the expertise of his coach.

Priestley et al., (2015) found from their research that, in schools where teacher agency and reciprocity was lacking, "communication [was] more likely to be one way, encouraging a culture of dissemination, rather than dialogue" (p.103). Noah's experience suggests that, in coaching, new teachers can develop agency over time and that this encourages dialogue with their coach. To start with, Noah is deferential to the dissemination of information and the communication between Noah and his coach was more one-way, and then, as Noah's teaching developed, the communication became more "*back and forth*". Noah found deference harder as he gained confidence and his communication with his coach shifted in line with this. This suggests that teachers build the tools for dialogue with their colleagues as they train, alongside the skills and confidence to exert agency. The deference that Noah showed in the instructional coaching process required a trust in what was being disseminated to him. This trust was based on his past experiences of successful learning processes. However, new teachers without positive prior experiences of learning and success may not have this trust in the process.

Olivia recognised that she had enhanced "*resilience*" when she entered teacher training. She had been a senior manager in a medical field for decades prior to beginning teaching. In her placement school, she was the oldest member of her subject team; the least experienced teacher; and her coach was almost thirty years her junior. Being a teacher had been a long-held ambition and, despite experiencing personal tragedies in the year prior to joining teacher training, she left her well-paid management role to re-train. Olivia knew that the resilience she had gained through past experiences was an asset to her training.

Dawborn-Gundland et al. (2025) wrote that, when supporting career changers, it is important to understand that:

Resilience is a dynamic process rooted in a broader environment, rather than an isolated personal characteristic. (p.4)

This suggests that the resilience that Olivia had built up in her previous role may not be directly transferable into teaching; she may need to build up a new resilience in her teaching role, alongside a “reimagining of [her] previous professional self” (p.3). This all needed to be taken into consideration when she started instructional coaching.

Aside from enhanced resilience, Olivia could cite no benefits to being a career changer entering teacher training. Pierce (2007) uses the word “liminality” to describe the “suspension, even temporary loss, of professional identity” (p.31) experienced by individuals when they enter teaching. This chimes with Olivia’s experience as she suspends, or potentially loses permanently, one profession identity, and starts afresh developing a new professional identity as a teacher.

McNally et al. (2008), like Buchanan (2015), argue that the shift in a new teacher’s professional identity needs to be acknowledged, and that the transition into teaching cannot be seen as a “rational policy-governed progression through the elements of a standard” (p.295). The process of becoming a teacher needs to draw on the “existing capacities and personal qualities” of individuals (p.291-2). However, Olivia’s teacher training, through instructional coaching, did not allow her to share, or explicitly draw on, her past roles. She talked about going from the “*top of your game*” to the “*absolute bottom*”. This suggests that her understanding was that her professional identity did not gradually evolve – instead she experienced the dropping of her past professional identity, when she picked up her teacher professional identity. She stated that her training “*was a bit backwards: they’re observing you how to be a teacher*” when, she felt, that she should be observing them. She had doubts about the methods used to train her but, despite her extensive past work experience, she did not feel in a place to question them.

Olivia was weeks into her teacher training when interviewed for the study and she described the transition into teaching as “*not an easy pill to swallow*”. In their study of Australian career changers, Dadvand et al., (2024) describe the discomfort of entering teaching as a “praxis shock” where individuals “need to reposition their professional identity as a novice” (p.485). Instructional coaching compounds the narrative of coach as expert and teacher as novice and this narrative may make the transition into teaching harder for a career changer.

However, Noah positioned himself as a novice at the start of the process through deliberate deference to the expertise of his coach. Rather than struggling with a “praxis shock” (Dadvand et al., 2024, p.485), he was prepared to accept his position in the novice/expert relationship.

Williams (2010) describes career changers as “expert novices” (p.639). This highlights the juxtapositions around the role of the teacher in instructional coaching discussed in chapter 2 and the need to better understand their experiences so that the process can better “acknowledge the person that the teacher is” (Hargreaves, 1992, p.236).

However, in a performative culture, there is little incentive to gain a greater understanding of teachers as individuals. Building relationships between coach and teacher is a “complex, time-consuming task” (Lowenhaupt et al., 2014) and the process of instructional coaching can potentially yield progress without it. Olivia engaged in, and gained value from, the instructional coaching without her coach, or the coaching process, needing to acknowledge her shifting professional identity and her prior experiences. There is a conflict in the implementation of instructional coaching between the importance of the agentic individual and the importance of the compliance of that individual (Wilkins and Wood, 2009). This conflict may be exaggerated in career changers who have developed other professional identities and shown agency and resilience in other professions.

Teachers’ Past Careers Within Teaching

Five of the career changers had held teaching roles prior to teacher training, as a sports coach, teaching assistant or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher. I focus on three of these teachers in this section whose experiences aligned: They all voiced that their coaches had trust in their competence as teachers, based on their prior teaching experience. Also, none of them engaged in the instructional process as prescribed by their training provider.

Oscar shared that his coach had unwarranted faith in his teaching abilities, and this was one of the reasons she was not inclined to provide instructional coaching to Oscar as prescribed. He said that his skills were “*overrated*” by his coach and that his lessons would “*quite often suck*”. His coach had not often seen him teach so her rating of his teaching was “*based on assumption as opposed to empirical evidence*”. He believed his prior teaching experience on a different continent had not prepared him for teaching in England and his prior experience was just “*learning habits that I had to unlearn*”. Oscar shared that new teachers needed support to maintain a career in teaching as “it’s a job that can pick you up and run away with you.” He required support from his mentor with pastoral elements (such as how to manage workload alongside parenting) alongside teacher development. He appeared to be at the stage that Williams and Prestage (2002) describe as “the balance between survival and development” (p.37) and, to stay in teaching in the long term, he felt that support from his mentor was crucial.

Similarly to Oscar, Theo, who ran a sports coaching business alongside training to be a teacher, said that his coach “*had confidence*” in him, which meant that instructional coaching was not seen to be a “*priority*” for his development. He also had limited observations from his coach. In contrast to Oscar, he had faith in his own abilities: “*I didn’t feel I needed the support [...] I know that I’ll be okay*”. Theo’s coach did not follow the instructional coaching process, as prescribed by the training provider. He shared his thoughts about the coaching he had received:

I don’t think it was wrong [...] I’m becoming a better teacher [...] just because it was different this way [...] all depends on the individual [...] Suits me, to be honest.

The lack of observation of both Theo and Oscar could, on the one hand, suggest that their coach trusted them. Applying Foucault’s (1979) metaphor of the panopticon, the coaches saw no need to check whether the teachers were, “behaving as [they] should, in accordance with the rule or not” (p.59). Therefore, observation was not required.

Competence and reliability are two of Tschannen-Moran’s (2014) five facets of trust between teachers. The lack of coach competence and their unreliability in failing to observe the teacher when they were supposed to, could have undercut teachers’ trust in their coaches. However, the teachers agreed that this lack of ‘gaze’ suited them. They were able to continue with their jobs as teachers, without observation.

White et al. (2024), when studying career changers into teaching, conclude that the gradual removal of universities from teacher training means that there is an over-reliance on in-school mentors as the “desired knowledge holders by policy makers” (p.109). However, the mentors are “not well placed to support them [career changers]” (p.110). Career changers require adaptations to their support which Oscar and Theo’s coaches may not have been equipped to provide, and this may account for their lack of observation and coaching.

Huberman (1992) argues that, on entry into teaching, teachers experience themes of “survival and discovery” (p.123) simultaneously. The preoccupation with surviving in teaching, and discovering novelties about being a teacher, might explain why Theo and Oscar were content to not be observed or receive the instructional coaching as prescribed by their training provider. However, as career changers with prior teaching experience, their stage in the ‘life cycle’ of teaching may be harder to place. It also shows the complexity of trust relations based on feelings of competence. In this situation, the coach may be seen as competent by the teacher, even though they are not fulfilling their role as a coach as prescribed by the training provider.

Like Oscar, Oliver had taught EFL prior to joining teacher training. He said that changing careers had provided him with: *“one of the most powerful tools, which is humility [...] coming into teaching, and being bad at what I do, after being good at what I do, [was] demoralising”*. His experience echoes Olivia’s feelings of being at the *“absolute bottom”* when she joined teaching and Noah’s need for *“deference”* on entry into the profession.

Hogg et al. (2023) also found that teacher training should support career changers to *“develop positive collegial relations to nurture their work socialisation”* (p.12). Oliver found *“cerebral discussions”* with his coach were more valuable than instructional coaching. This aligns with Negrea’s (2024) findings that discussions and sharing experiences with colleagues plays a significant role in the development of career changers. But if instructional coaching takes place during most of the allocated mentoring time, then there are limited opportunities for these discussions, and so teachers and coaches must make the decision how best to use their time together. In the case of Theo, Oliver and Oscar, this meant acting in contradiction to the activities prescribed by the training provider.

Similarly to Oscar, there was no formal penalty for Oliver for not engaging in the coaching if he continued to engage with the online platform that tracked his progress. As his coach agreed that instructional coaching was not the best use of their time together, there was no *“suspicion and alarm from within”* and there were no consequences for *“challenging normalisation”* (Wilkins and Wood, 2009, p.294). They could disengage from the coaching without risk.

Theo, Oscar and Oliver’s experiences lie in contrast to the assumption that teachers are passive subjects of educational policy reform and thus passive subjects in the adoption of, and engagement with, instructional coaching. I propose, in chapter 2, that this is one of the unchallenged assumptions about teachers on which instructional coaching is based. These teachers resist the forces of governmentality (Ball, 2013b). This could be because they have a well-formed understanding of their own professional identities, and these professional identities do not align with meeting externally decided performance measures at that time in their training. Or, conversely, it could be that they are focusing on surviving in teaching. So, they follow their coaches’ decision not to engage in the coaching, even though the decision is based on limited observation of their teaching.

New teacher agency in instructional coaching presents questions for teachers, coaches and training providers: If the teachers agree with their coaches and disengage from the instructional coaching then are they really showing agency? Is their teacher professional identity and agency developed to the point that they can decide, in opposition to their training provider, what is in the best interests of their personal and professional development? If instructional coaching is imposed onto the new teacher, and compliance is assumed, does this limit their agency? Does mandating training methods

recognise that agency develops over time and that deference to expertise at the start of a learning process is part of that agency development?

These questions made the career changers from inside and outside teaching to be a group of interest in the data. The other groups of interest were those who identified with certain subject specialisms.

Subject Specialisms

Musicians

Seven of the teachers related their experiences of acquiring musical, sporting or scientific skills to their experiences of instructional coaching. I argue that the technicalisation of teaching (Wilkins and Wood, 2009), and the implementation of instructional coaching, is based on the assumption (outlined in chapter 2, p.27) that a teacher's practice can be separated from the teacher so that it can be fixed. Instructional coaching has its roots in the theories of deliberate practice, which cite examples from musical and sporting skill development (Ericsson, 2016; Berliner, 2001). This might mean that teachers who have experience of gaining musical and sporting skills are more familiar with the methods of instructional coaching and this will affect their experience of the coaching.

Three of the teachers were musicians, not just as their specialism in school, but as performers or tutors outside of school. Two teachers' experiences as musicians are of interest because they directly related their experiences of instructional coaching to their music specialisms.

Noah, whose experience as a career changer has been discussed earlier (p.89), found that the instructional coaching process was not something that he needed much encouragement to engage in; he already had trust in the process from having to repeatedly "*break things down in order to get a result*" when learning to play musical instruments.

He had spent many years being instructed and being an instructor in music, however he did see a difference between learning to play a particular piece on an instrument, (which involved continuous cycles of feedback, modelling and practice), to learning to teach. He believed that "*being reflective is super, super, super important*" in teaching but the instructional coaching process did not provide "*enough time to think things through*".

Similarly to Noah, Millie, a musician and performing artist, noted: "*music is a physical, muscle memory thing [...] a physical thing*" whereas teaching involved "*thinking things through really carefully*". This desire to think and create new ideas in teaching, lies in contrast to the idea of instruction in which techniques can be replicated and practised without necessarily understanding

the why. Millie saw that instructional coaching was more suited to the development of behaviour management, and that when this was not a developmental focus for her, and she wanted *“in-depth pedagogical coaching”*, the instructional coaching ceased to be impactful. She wanted to be *“teaching better rather than making a class sit still better”*; to do this required thought and reflection that the instructional coaching process did not provide space for.

Haneda et al. (2019) argue that coaches can take two “stances” when coaching: “Directive”, in which the coach “acts in the role of expert” and gives “advice in a mainly prescriptive manner”, or “responsive” in which the coach aims to “elicit reflection on the part of the teacher” (p.166). They argue that a coach varies their application of a coaching model, like instructional coaching, based on their existing beliefs about education (p.171). Noah and Millie call for the more directive instructional coaching model to be adapted to include reflection. However, for a coach to elicit reflection from a teacher, they must see acquiring teaching skill as something that requires reflection. If the coach believes that acquiring teaching skill is directly comparable to acquiring musical skill, and they assume that the teacher can be separated from their practice, then they may not provide the space for reflection that these teachers feel they need.

Sportspeople

In a similar way to developing musical skill, two teachers related their experiences of developing as teachers, through coaching, to their experiences of developing in sport, through coaching.

Sophia argued that *“it’s much easier to be a great teacher than a great gymnast”* because she saw gymnastics as having a more challenging mixture of physical and cognitive development. She also stated that there was more imperative to continually improve in gymnastics because the field was generally of a higher standard. She saw a difference between gymnastics coaches and teacher coaches/mentors:

“You don’t need to be a top gymnast to be a really good coach. Logic would suggest that you could apply that to teaching, but I do think you need to be the best teacher to be a good mentor.”

In gymnastics, Sophia had gained a reputation for working hard and being enthusiastic, even though she was *“never the quickest or the brightest”*. She had applied the same mentality to her teacher training. She found that she quickly satisfied external progress measures in teaching, including gaining better GCSE outcomes than her coach in her second year of teaching. She did not see why instructional coaching was needed in her development if she was outperforming the set progress measures. Sophia thought that she could not make any more progress in her current school, but she did see that there were other contexts, with higher performance measures, in which she could

continue to develop. She was leaving her school to join a school that was famous for its rigorous teacher development, including extensive use of instructional coaching. She stated: *"I need to be the smallest fish in the biggest pond"*.

In this case, success in teaching was narrowly defined as using certain techniques and achieving certain student outcomes. Sophia could be seen as a neo-performative teacher, who aligned her development as a teacher with meeting certain performance measures. Sachs (2001) describes "designer teachers" who show "compliance to policy imperatives and perform at high levels of efficiency and effectiveness" (p.156). But Sophia did not comply with the instructional coaching once she believed it was no longer of her benefit. She saw teaching as an activity in relation to her peers and, once she was outperforming them, she moved schools to find more worthy competitors in a context that more closely aligned with her need for continuous challenge and achievement.

Sophia no longer trusted the competence of those around her. In line with Wilkins et al. (2020), it appears that she had gained autonomy and agency in her teaching through meeting performance targets. She had been seemingly permitted to disengage from instructional coaching when her GCSE results reached a certain level. However, if those targets ceased to be met, her autonomy could be withdrawn and so her autonomy could be seen as a "highly contingent, regulated autonomy" (p.28).

In her next school, she talked about a massive increase in classroom observation, instructional coaching and monitoring while she was a *"newbie"*. The performance targets would be raised, (there would be higher expectations on her GCSE outcomes), and Sophia was aware that her agency as a teacher would be removed until she showed that she could meet those targets. To be 'good' in her next school would be a challenge. Sophia invited that challenge and the increased surveillance that went with it, even though that meant a confinement of her agency.

Sullivan et al., (2020) argue that, in a performative culture, early career teachers are faced with various judgements of effectiveness and these "external benchmarks have eroded broader understandings of what it means to be a quality teacher" (p.399). When Sophia met the external benchmarks early in her career, such as student GCSE grades that were higher than her coach's, she equated this with quality teaching. So, her argument that teaching was easier to succeed in than gymnastics was contextual: success was aligned with performance outcomes in a particular school context. If a school had higher performance outcomes, then teaching in that school was seen as more challenging and more appealing to Sophia. As increased performance outcomes meant increased instructional coaching to meet those outcomes, Sophia's engagement with the instructional coaching at her new school would be greater than in a school context with lower performance outcomes.

George, like Sophia, had experience of competing in archery at a high level. He could also see the links between the instructional coaching he received as an archer with the instructional coaching he received in his teacher training. Prior to joining teacher training, he had experienced poor coaching in archery, which led to a decline in his performance: *“four coaches changed everything I did over three days and that was the end of that [...] I never got it back.”* He highlighted the importance of coaches recognising prior experience and not taking a deficit approach to coaching (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005).

Until his poor archery coaching experience, George believed that he had taken to the sport naturally, and he had started to win competitions quickly. He remembered the day after he first practiced archery: *“I woke up the next morning just like, ‘I have an identity.’”*

The archery coaches who *“changed everything”* for George assumed that their methods for improving George’s practice were correct and they discounted George’s prior success in the sport and his developing professional identity as a sportsperson.

Spencer et al. (2017) in their survey of the professional development needs of early career teachers, found that the *“Deficit Model”* of developing teachers *“assumes any shortcomings can be attributed to the individual teacher”* (p.35). As in individual sports, the focus of instructional coaching in teaching is on improving the performance of the individual. The focus is also on standardising and normalising practice (Perryman, 2006; Wilkins and Wood, 2009). His sports coaches’ intervention ignored George’s relationship with the sport and his developing identity; they stopped George *“tinkering”* (Huberman, 1992, p.131) with his own practice; they attempted to align his practice towards the ‘normal’; and, in doing so, reduced his performance and he disengaged with the sports coaching.

George’s experience of coaching in sport, alongside his experience gained as a career changer, described earlier in this chapter, made George sceptical of instructional coaching going into teaching. He reflected on how *“people have their bright ideas”* about how to coach people and those coaching processes needed adapting for the individual.

These teachers’ experiences raise questions about the suitability of applying coaching processes from music and sport to teaching. It also highlights the importance of recognising the individual in the process and not assuming a deficit in practice, without better understanding the developing professional identity of the teacher. Sophia’s experience also highlights the importance of how teachers assimilate the meeting of performance objectives with succeeding in teaching. If teaching is compared to sport or music, where performance is often visible and quantifiable, then quality of

teaching and a new teacher's ideas about teaching may be based on narrow views of success. Instructional coaching may be seen by new teachers as a form of individual performance coaching in which the endpoint is determined by the meeting of quantifiable criteria, such as student GCSE grades.

Scientists

Three of the teachers interviewed were science specialists and they reflected on how the instructional coaching process aligned with their familiarity with scientific processes. They all engaged with the coaching as prescribed by their training provider.

Lily holds a degree in neuroscience, and she found instructional coaching “*extremely logical*”. She stated that as a scientist, she was used to “*following methods*” and she “*needs structure*”, which the instructional coaching process provided for her. She summarised:

“I really like structure and I think that's why instructional coaching worked so well for me anyway. I just feel like I'm really used to following method steps and that's exactly what this kind of coaching is.”

For Lily, the instructional coaching process needed to be taken seriously or it “*renders itself useless*”. She suggested that teachers of subject other than science may not speak so positively about the process:

“There's definitely some people in our school that do not like it. Whatsoever. Whether it's coincidence that they're kind of in more like creative subjects, I think they'd like a little bit more kind of leniency with it [...] I think that's typically either people love it or they wish that they had a little bit more room for leniency.”

Eleanor taught biology and had completed a sandwich degree in cognitive neuroscience. She shared that being a scientist helped her to understand the science and the research used to inform instructional coaching:

“I definitely think, obviously, with my cognitive science background, it's a lot easier for me to understand the concepts, which has helped my teaching because I know that based on this particular model [instructional coaching] we need to focus on these things.”

Ellie holds a physics degree and, in line with Lily and Eleanor, explained how being a scientist affected her experience of instructional coaching and, like Lily, she compared her experience to those who taught other subjects:

“I think it might be because scientists we're quite, like, analytical and

methodical about things and if we're given a set of instructions we're always going to follow the instructions. Whereas, I feel like a lot of other subjects might kind of take it as they can change it wherever the needs be, I don't know, maybe, because I'm so methodical, I know I want to follow step 1, 2, 3, 4 and that's what helps me kind of meet the instructional coaching and pass those actionable steps."

Science teacher professional identity development is of special interest in the literature (Rutti et al., 2013; Helms, 1998; Chung-Parsons and Bailey, 2019). Helms' (1998) study concluded that:

Dimensions of [science teachers'] identities are, to greater or lesser degrees, defined by [science]. Or, at the very least, they construct an identity in direct relation to science (p.831)

Teachers' subject specialisms could be seen to be an important factor in their professional identity development, particularly in secondary school teachers (Day et al., 2006). However, I believe it is significant that these three secondary science teachers found the instructional coaching process to be overwhelmingly positive in comparison to the experiences of the other teachers. There are many other factors affecting their experience – most notably that they all received instructional coaching in a school who used instructional coaching with all teachers, not just new teachers. So, as Helms warns, "it is important that researchers be careful about categorising teachers and clumping them into arbitrary belief categories" (p.832).

Summary

As opposed to assuming compliance in the instructional coaching, the data suggests that the developing professional identities and agency of teachers should be considered as a factor influencing the teacher experience and therefore the level of their engagement. The experiences of two teachers suggest that a new teacher's understanding of their own sex and gender has an influence on their experience of instructional coaching – how they were perceived by their coach and how aligned they were with the process.

Career changers from inside teaching showed less engagement with instructional coaching potentially because their coaches had an inflated sense of their competency as teachers and decided it was not needed for them. Also because of the new teacher's need for discussions around the more practical aspects of 'surviving' as a teacher after the "praxis shock" (Dadvand et al., 2024, p.485) of joining teacher training. Career changers from inside teaching showed more engagement with coaching either through a more developed understanding for the need for compliance at the start of the learning process or because their past professional identities were not transferable when they entered teaching. Career changers showed an understanding of their developing professional

identities, and career changers from inside teaching seemed to be able to leverage their agency to not engage with the coaching process. This raises questions about whether developing agency, and taking control over one's developing professional identity, means making decisions about what not to do as well as what to do. If the new teacher decides, with their coach, to not take part in the instructional coaching as prescribed, it is unclear whether this is in the best interests of the teacher.

Subject specialisms, inside and outside of school, suggested that new teachers who were musicians and sportspeople were more familiar with the instructional process and were able to make comparisons between music, sport and teaching, which influenced their experiences of instructional coaching. Scientists showed a liking for the instructional coaching process and appreciated its logical structure.

This chapter has presented three factors that affected the new teachers' developing professional identities and agency and, in turn, influenced how they experienced instructional coaching. The implementation of instructional coaching needs to take into consideration the developing individual professional identities and agency of new teachers. The coach, as a key member of the new teacher's social context, plays a part in developing the identity and agency in the new teacher. The crucial relationship between the teacher and their coach will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: New Teacher Experiences of Instructional Coaching – The Influence of the Teacher-Coach Relationship

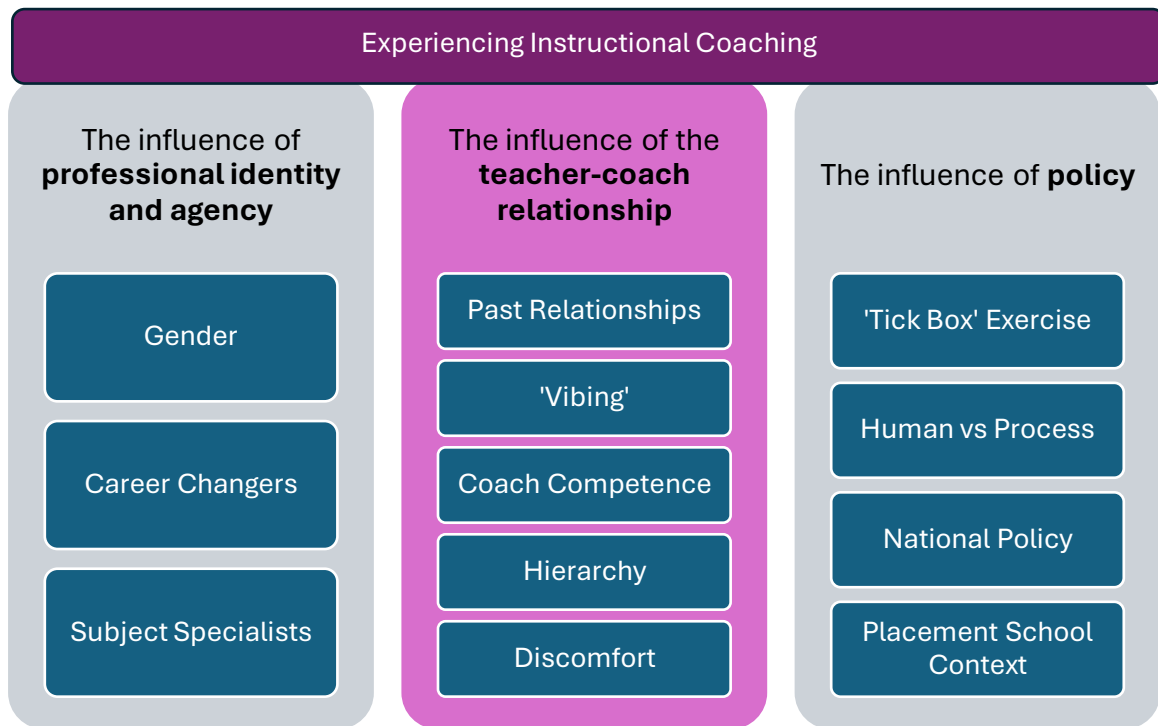


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Individual Teacher Experience and Engagement in Instructional Coaching

Introduction: The Importance of the Mentor

This chapter focuses on the new teacher’s relationship with their in-school mentor as instructional coach. The themes relating to this relationship are summarised in Figure 2 and discussed in this chapter, following an introduction, which summarises the key literature relating to the role of the mentor.

Mentoring is a crucial part of the professional development and socialising of new teachers (Clark and Byrnes, 2012). Negrea (2024) summarises:

Mentors and experienced teachers in schools play a significant role in cognitive and emotional support for the trainees as well as in boosting their confidence and sense of belonging (p.8).

By having influence over new teachers entering the profession, mentors can also have a wider influence on the development of the teaching profession (Devos, 2010; Lofthouse, 2018; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2000). However, the mentoring that a new teacher receives varies greatly depending on numerous factors, such as the scope of the mentor’s role; the mentor’s individual dispositions; and the school context in which the mentoring sits (Williams and Prestage, 2002; Haneda et al., 2019). Instructional coaching upped the prescriptive nature of teacher interactions with their mentor.

However, there is a danger that the crucial pastoral element of the mentor's role will diminish with the need to fulfil the requirements of coaching. Jones (2005), writing 20 years ago, highlights that the pastoral element of mentoring varies due to its lack of prescription:

As the pastoral dimension is not identified as a discrete item in the induction literature distributed to schools, it depends largely on the goodwill and professionalism of individual staff, and is contingent on the type of culture developed within each school (p.523).

The school and policy context in which the instructional coaching relationship functions will be discussed in chapter 6.

Due to the variance in mentoring for new teachers, over the last 30 years, English education policy has attempted to regulate the work of mentors. This is seen notably in the introduction of induction mentors for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in 1999 and more resource allocation to Early Career Teacher (ECT) mentors in 2020 (Department for Education, 2019b). From September 2025, the new ECT Entitlement has allocated more funding to mentor training, to increase mentor quality and reduce mentor workload (Department for Education, 2025). Lead Providers of ITTECF will be required to provide "session materials" for mentors and provide further "diagnostic tools" so mentors can tailor the updated resources for their new teachers (Department for Education, 2025, p.4). Though instructional coaching was not specified by the ECF, it was incorporated into the curriculums of ECF Lead Providers. Thus, instructional coaching became "a funded remit of the mentor role and a prime mentor responsibility" (Daley et al., 2023, p.351). In an instructional coaching relationship, the in-school mentor provides the coaching, and so, throughout chapters 4-6, I refer to the new teacher's mentor as their coach.

The increased focus on mentoring in policy reflects the importance of coaches to the new teacher experience. The importance of the coach came across as the strongest of the three main themes in the data (summarised in Fig. 4.1) in that teachers spoke more about their coaches than any other aspect of instructional coaching.

As discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 4, the development of new teacher professional identity and agency is a crucial aspect of teacher training and can determine a new teacher's future success and longevity in teaching. Arguably, the coach has the largest influence on a new teacher's development including the development of their professional identity and agency. As their professional identities shift, so does their relationship with their coach. However, the literature suggests that this relationship needs to be both trusting and hierarchical. This is the conflict which informed my second research question, which is addressed in this chapter: *How do new teachers experience the relationship with their instructional coach?*

The new teachers reflected on how their relationships with their coaches affected their experience of instructional coaching. Data analysis identified five factors that influenced their relationships with their coaches and, in turn, their experiences of instructional coaching.

Past Relationships

All 15 teachers highlighted having positive relationships with their coaches; they perceived, to varying degrees, that they developed through their coaches' support. In contrast to the positive relationships with their instructional coaches, eight teachers talked about past negative relationships with someone else who had supported them – either another mentor in a placement school; a subject tutor from their university; or another support role from their training provider.

Prior relationships, outside of the instructional coaching relationship, may not seem of relevance to this study. However, the new teachers' contrasting experiences of one-to-one support are of interest for two reasons:

Firstly, the fact that their negative relationships were in the past, at the start of their teacher training, could suggest that the teachers became more well-equipped to work in a one-to-one relationship the further they went into their training. Thus, they found their relationship with their instructional coach was more positive. This finding contrasts with the work of Hargreaves (2002) whose study suggested that teachers become less equipped, if trust is broken in a previous relationship. There may be a need for new teachers to be better equipped to navigate interpersonal relationships in school, especially at the start of their training. Patrick et al. (2010) argue for the development of "a range of skills" that "facilitate successful professional interactions" (p.279). They argue that the coach has a key role in developing these skills through encouraging critique and appraisal of teaching strategies.

Secondly, the influence of the past negative relationships highlights a need for the instructional coach, and the teacher, to understand the teacher's past experiences and their effect on their development. The past experiences serve to provide a point of comparison for the new teachers and influenced how they entered the relationship with their instructional coach.

Three teachers stated that they were "*lucky*" (Layla, Noah, Lily) to have been paired with their instructional coach and Layla described her coach pairing as striking what is "*more valuable than gold*". George shared that his relationship with his coach was "*actually one of the reasons to stay in school*". This aligns with Cameron and Grant's (2017) mentoring study in which participants described their mentors as "*lifelines*" (p.134).

The early relationships that new teachers have with support roles, including instructional coaches, could pave the way for how teachers build collegial relationships, manage conflict and develop socially throughout their careers (Patrick et al., 2010). It would be expected that the negative relationships, the “betrayals” (Hargreaves, 2002, p.393), that some of the new teachers experienced early on, would negatively affect their relationships with their instructional coaches. However, the past negative relationships served to make the positive relationships with their instructional coaches feel more valuable.

When the teachers were provided with a safe space (Haneda et al., 2016) to have an opinion in the instructional coaching conversation, and have agency over some practical or developmental element of the process, then respect was built (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). The coaches served as the “trust-builders” (Anderson et al., 2014, p.15) by taking the teachers’ ideas on board, for example, about where the meeting was held or the targets that were set. The coaches listening to the teachers’ ideas was particularly important to the new teachers early in their relationships with the coaches.

In contrast to their positive relationships with their coaches, the teachers cited two broad experiences that made past relationships more negative: teachers feeling that they were not liked or wanted, and the feeling of being overly judged or criticised early in the relationship.

Ava cited her experience with an in-school mentor during her first school placement, who had been “*dumped with a student teacher*”. She continued: “*I was plonked with her [...] she put up with me.*”

This perception of being unwanted was compounded by a feeling of injustice and inflexibility in the feedback she received. She was being directed, rather than advised: “*you listen, this is how this is done*”. When direction was followed, the mentor would then change her mind as to the techniques she wanted to see, so Ava conceded that “*there was no winning*”, which “*shattered*” her confidence going into her next placement school. Burger (2023) states that “close guidance and direct transmission of knowledge” can “undermine mentees’ internalisation of mastery experiences in the classroom” (p. 108). Ava was confused as to which advice she should be following and this undermined the guidance she was receiving. However, this past negative experience did not negatively impact how she entered her relationship with her instructional coach.

Similarly, Millie experienced “*very niggly feedback*” from a subject tutor from her university accreditor. The feedback did not consider the context of her school and conflicted with feedback from her coach. Instead of following the feedback, she describes “*paying lip service*” to the tutor saying “*yep, yep, yep*” and then “*carry[ing] on with what [she] was doing*”.

Eleanor described the first time she met a past coach, prior to her allocation to her instructional coach. The school had assigned a thirty-minute period for teachers to get to know their coaches. The coach did not use the whole time and then *“carried on with what he was doing on his computer”*, suggesting that he did not have time for her. Like Ava’s experience, Eleanor was *“not free to speak”* or *“share how [she] felt”* because she was *“just doing what he said”*. She therefore *“dreaded”* the coaching meeting. She summarised that her and her past coach just *“didn’t have that vibe”*, which seemed to be cemented in the first meeting.

Mia defined that missing ‘vibe’ as being *“misaligned”* with a past support role who *“rubbed [her] literally the wrong way”* by not understanding her responsibilities as a parent and therefore judging her unfairly. Again, this disconnect was embedded from their first meeting. Oscar also voiced being *“judged”* by a previous mentor which contributed to making his ITT year a poor experience.

Hargreaves (2002) argues that teachers are not actively aware of building trusting relationships in schools, and they are only made aware when *“there is a collapse of trust”* (p.396). The negative relationships that the teachers experienced, could be seen as *“betrayals”* (p.393) and Hargreaves argues:

Intense or repeated betrayals break the bonds of professional interaction and social belonging that make professional community possible (p.404)

How the teachers and instructional coaches overcame these betrayals through building belonging and trust will be discussed in the next section. Though the ‘vibe’ required between coach and teacher, that served to make teachers feel ‘lucky’, is subjective and cannot be quantified, it does suggest that the pairing of teacher and coach is important to their experience of instructional coaching.

All teachers had a perception of how their coach had been allocated to them and this served as their first experiences of their coach. Coach allocation varied: the majority of teachers were given a coach based on the more experienced teachers’ availability and subject-specialism; and two coaches requested to work with a particular teacher. This selection, and the feeling of being chosen, was a pivotal moment for certain teachers, notably George, following his past negative experience. Two teachers were matched with their coach by senior leaders who thought that they would work well together, based on perceptions of their personalities. Though still contrived, this suggests an attempt to manufacture the ‘vibe’ that teachers described. The next section expands on the commonalities that teachers identified with their coaches and how this served to build belonging in the relationship, and influence their engagement in instructional coaching.

'Vibing'

Despite only two teachers being purposefully matched with their coaches by their school leaders, most teachers shared commonalities with their coaches. These commonalities were experiences that they deemed to be important, and they also recognised in their coach, such as being parents, liking particular subjects, sharing past negative experiences and overcoming shared barriers. As the majority of teachers were not deliberately paired with their coaches, it is interesting that most of the teachers and coaches found affinities with each other. This may be because there was more purposeful pairing being led by leadership than they were aware of, or because of the new teachers' need to find belonging within their school community (Cameron and Grant, 2017).

Mia and her coach were both parents, specifically of girls, and so her coach had an *"understanding of the constant exhaustion"*. She felt a *"camaraderie"* with her coach, and her coach's understanding of her as a mother, and a teacher, made her *"feel that [she was] worth it."*

Similarly, Oliver and his coach were both parents and some of their meeting time was dedicated to discussing the practicalities of managing a demanding job alongside parenthood: *"they were the exact right person I needed to speak to"*. He said that his coach *"actually saved [him]"* and was pivotal in supporting him *"to become a teacher with two children"*, even though this meant diverting from the prescribed instructional coaching process: *"I had someone who empathised rather than going through a tick box exercise"*.

Millie and her coach also diverged from the prescribed coaching process. They both had similar ways of communicating, saying that her coach was *"not chatty"*. They also shared a general distrust of the instructional coaching process. This commonality served to strengthen Millie's trust that her coach had no motivations outside of making her better: he was *"not invested in instructional coaching [...]* all he wants is for me to be able to teach successfully". Millie voiced that her coach was more aligned to supporting her than fulfilling a policy mandate, through providing the prescribed instructional coaching. Her trust in her coach was strengthened by their mutual mistrust of the coaching process. How the new teacher experiences instructional coaching as a policy initiative is a theme that will be picked up in detail in chapter 6.

In line with Daly et al. (2023), the coaches who did not follow the instructional coaching process maybe did not fully understand the *"well-reasoned conceptual framework"* (p.361) that underpinned instructional coaching as a form of teacher training. They did not understand it and so did not engage with it. This, in turn, meant that their teachers did not engage with it. Also, the need

to “perform as instructional coaches to achieve pre-determined goals” (p.359) could be misaligned with what they saw their role should be when supporting a new teacher.

Haneda et al., (2019) describe instructional coaching from a sociocultural perspective and how individuals develop in a school context by participating in activities with more experienced members. The “individuals gradually appropriate the culture's tools, both material and psychological, as well as the modes of action and thinking that they make possible” (p.166). Oliver and Millie do not adopt instructional coaching as a ‘tool’ in their school’s context because they are not guided to do so by their coach.

The teachers agreed that the divergence from the instructional coaching was what they needed at the time. Their coaches’ willingness to adapt the process for their needs made them feel listened to, and empathised with, and this strengthened the bond between teacher and coach. Lofthouse (2018) argues that mentoring relationships should be motivated by “what each individual thinks, feels and wants and how their own ideas motivate them to learn” (p.258). The argument for individualistic coaching is in conflict with a need to provide consistent, replicable instructional coaching across new teachers. But, without structure to the coaching, it potentially places too much power and responsibility in the hands of the coach for determining the new teacher’s support.

Rippon and Martin (2003) present three relationships at play when mentoring new teachers: procedural relationships, power relationships and personal relationships. They argue that:

Continuity and consistency can flourish where the procedural and power dimensions are countered by positive personal relationships (p.218).

Again, this highlights the complexity of the many roles that the coach needs to fulfil when supporting a new teacher and the importance of the skills of both the teacher and the coach in navigating their relationship. It also highlights that a positive relationship between teacher and coach is crucial to the success of the coaching.

The importance of recognising the individual was echoed by Eleanor in her summary of what made her coach so important to her development:

Having someone there that’s openly communicating with you, that’s understanding you as a person and you as a teacher, and this is, like, willing to listen and really get to the nitty gritty about what you want to do, and how you want to improve, and making it so collaborative. I’ve seen that effect on me as a teacher.

These teachers were shown personal regard (Bryk and Schneider, 2002) and benevolence (Tschannen-Moran, 2014) by their coaches and this built trust in the coach.

Layla recalled that, early in their relationship, her coach had identified commonalities between them in terms of race. Layla identified as a *“Bangladeshi, brown, hijabi, Muslim teacher”* and her coach was a *“Jamaican with American birth”*; she stated that her and her coach were both *“hybrids basically”*. Their identified similarities built belonging between them, particularly in their predominantly white British school demographic.

Layla’s coach recognised that there were *“certain hurdles that [she was] facing that others won’t face at all”*. Layla’s coach adapted the coaching meeting to dedicate part of it to the practicalities of overcoming their shared *“hurdles”* in the workplace. Her coach wished that he had had similar support when he was new to teaching: *“He said, ‘I’m being to you what I wish I had.’”*

However, as stated in the previous section (p.102), Layla acknowledged the *“luck”* in being paired with her coach. Devos (2010), in her study of teacher professional identity development through mentoring, found that:

In mentoring, the mentee, her work practices and identity becomes subject to transformation, or reconstitution (p.1221).

The understanding that Layla gains from her coach is crucial to her professional identity development as a teacher but, as Rippon and Martin (2003) state: *“these understandings should not be left to chance”* (p.223).

Other understandings between teacher and coach were more subtle and required the teacher to disclose information to their coach. Ava, due to early childhood experiences, stated that she could not *“trust anyone with certain things”*. She was comfortable enough to share this with her coach and her coach *“understood that”*; this understanding, and shared personal information, meant that Ava *“had to trust her”*.

George also had negative past experiences which he shared with his coach early in their relationship. His coach had a *“good understanding of what someone who has struggled with this stuff might be like”* and he *“really value[d]”* the empathetic relationship. The increased understanding between teacher and coach meant that his coach trusted him as a teacher: *“there wasn’t a thought that I hadn’t done something good”*. George and his coach also shared various other interests, and he joked fondly that they were *“both extreme geeks”*.

The understanding that Ava and George's coaches showed them, aligns with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2000) call for coaching and mentoring of new teachers to take more account of their emotional lives, particularly in a performative culture:

Mentorship, therefore, involves more than guiding protégés through learning standards and skill sets and extends to providing strong and continuous emotional support (p.53).

Burger (2023) highlights the importance of coaches fostering "adaptive emotional management" and acting as a model for emotional management in a school setting (p.109). Ava and George's coaches recognised the importance of the emotions related to their past experiences, and this built the trusting relationship on which instructional coaching could be introduced. Burger (2023) acknowledges that, if coaches are more inclined towards a "transmissive approach" (p.109) in which their role is to transmit knowledge to the teacher, then teacher agency will be reduced, and the teacher will be less likely to share authentic emotions.

Oscar shared that he liked his coach and how much he liked his coach linked to his engagement in the instructional coaching. However, Tschannen-Moran (2014) argues that trusting is "not primarily an emotional process. There is an important distinction between trusting and liking a person" (p.25). This distinction is not seen in Oscar's experience.

Oscar and his coach were both new to the school. He described them as "*one of a kind*" and "*outcasts*". They shared a "*laid back attitude*" and, given how much they had in common, they would have been friends if they were not colleagues. His coach was aware of his bad experiences during his ITT year, which "*nearly killed [him]*" and she allowed him to "*find [his] feet without someone grabbing [him] by the ear and dragging [him] through it*".

They were both moving to new schools, where Oscar would have a new coach delivering instructional coaching. He said that he would engage with the process but feeling an affinity with his coach was important to this engagement: "*doing it with a [coach] who doesn't gel with me might turn it the other way*". His need to "*gel*" is comparable to the "*vibe*" (Eleanor) that other teachers required for engagement with their coaches.

In contrast, Theo raised that he was comfortable with his coach and that, this comfort, had led to a lack of challenge. He recognised that when his coach shifted from friendlier conversation to needing to follow the instructional coaching protocol, she was uncomfortable: "*when she's trying to be my [coach], she finds that difficult*". He admitted that a less comfortable, more hierarchical relationship

may have benefited his teaching more: *“I probably wouldn’t like them much, but they would make me a better teacher.”*

Olivia raised another issue with feeling too comfortable with a coach. She stated that they are: *“someone you can turn to but also someone who can scrutinise you”*. The coach’s role as collaborator and consort could be seen to conflict with their need to assess the teacher’s development to meet criteria. Sophia was also aware that she needed to engage in some way with instructional coaching because her QTS was *“relying on it”* and, if she did not gain QTS, there would be a *“financial penalty”*.

The various roles of the coach are reminiscent of the coaches in Hunt and Handsfield’s (2013) study who brought multiple roles to an interaction with a teacher, and it was not as simple as putting on different masks (p.53). Olivia was aware of the different, conflicting parts her coach was playing. Hobson et al., (2009) state that the clash between coach as supporter and coach as monitor leads to an *“ambivalent relationship”* that is *“potentially destructive of trust”* (p.315). However, the dual roles of the coach, as supporter and assessor, is a fixed part of the instructional coaching process for new teachers and it questions whether trust can be present in a relationship that is hierarchical and judgemental.

By developing a friendship and not delivering the instructional coaching as prescribed, Oscar’s coach shows him *“benevolence”* but potentially not respect: *“the recognition of the inherent worth or value of another person and the contributions he or she has to make to the collective”* (p.22). Tschannen-Moran (2014) states that respect is needed for trust to grow. The focus is on Oscar and his *“survival”* (Huberman, 1992, p.123) in teacher training; however, in being an outcast with Oscar, his coach removes him from the school community, as a collective, which may not be in the best interest of his development.

Their relationship sits within what Hargreaves (1992) terms a *“balkanised teacher culture”*:

Because of its large and differentiated nature, high school is, in fact, particularly vulnerable to the informal balkanisation of its teachers. This is why agreed whole-school policies are so difficult to secure in that setting (p.223).

Oscar and his coach, like Millie and her coach, are united by their opposition to others, which does not create a collaborative culture, which Hargreaves (2019) argues is crucial to teacher development. However, this balkanisation does serve to build belonging between teacher and coach and the new teachers believed that it was in the best interest of their development at the time. This

raises the question of who is best placed to decide what is best for the teacher and whether teacher collaboration is just needed for whole school policy compliance.

Priestley et al. (2015) describe “horizontal” relationships in schools and argue that:

Schools that develop effective structures to encourage such relationships cope more effectively with new policy, encouraging teachers to engage dialogically with and make sense of new policy (p.33).

Oscar and Millie develop relationships with their coaches that sit within existing school structures of trainee teacher and support role. But their relationships also sit outside, and potentially in opposition to, other school structures and policy. Their dialogical engagement is seen by the teachers as beneficial to their development but, through this engagement, they do not make sense of new policy. Instead, they agree that it does not make sense and reject the policy which encourages them to engage in instructional coaching.

Burger (2023) concludes, from his studies of German new teachers and mentors, that school leaders should consider pairing mentors and teachers based on the prior beliefs of the new teacher at the start of teacher training and finding mentors “whose approach to mentoring represents a counterpart to those beliefs” (p.117). The new teacher experiences discussed in this section suggest that the pairing of new teachers, based on commonalities, is an important factor in the teachers’ professional development. But the pairing is often left to chance and a teacher finding a coach that they ‘vibe’ with appears to be down to luck. In some cases, a pairing that is positive for the teacher has led to a lack of engagement in instructional coaching and, in two cases, the wider school community, making it unclear whether the positive relationship is at the sacrifice of the wider socialisation of the new teacher.

The data suggests that the coach has an enormous influence over the new teacher. Devos (2010) describes mentoring as a “technology for the production of worker identities” (p.1222), which is reminiscent of Ball’s (2013a) “technologies of government” (p.12). The coach could be seen as another vehicle through which power moves to control the new teacher. However, if the coach is not given that autonomy and control over a new teacher’s professional identity development then the regulated processes inherent in the instructional coaching process could lead to all teachers receiving support that does not take account of teacher individuality. This would diminish the sense of belonging and ‘vibe’ the teachers felt with their coaches.

Another factor that strengthened the new teacher's relationship with their coach, and their engagement in instructional coaching, was how the new teacher perceived the coach's competence as a coach and a teacher.

Coach Competence

Competence is cited as a key facet to building trusting relationships in schools (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Bryk and Schneider, 2002). In showing competence, coaches also provide models for their new teachers, which provide "vicarious experiences" (Burger, 2023, p.108) of success, which help teachers to visualise success in the classroom.

The teachers all agreed that their coaches were, when the relationship started, more competent teachers than them and they showed a level of admiration for this competence. Noah admired how teaching techniques were used by his coach like they were "*second nature*". Olivia remembers being "*amazed at the skill*" of her coach, when she supported her coach as a teaching assistant, prior to teacher training. Ellie saw her future teaching self in her coach, and she recalls watching her and thinking, "*I can do that*" and this reinforced that her coach was "*the same teacher that [she] wanted to be*". In contrast, Eleanor admired her coach but did not aspire to replicate them. This was emphasised by the support from her coach: "*it doesn't come across as they're just trying to make me be them*". Millie saw her coach as her singular source of development: "*Everything I've learnt about teaching, I've learnt from him*".

Lily admired her coach's skills as a coach and the time he had spent developing that skill. He was "*so experienced, he could help [her] regardless*" of the fact they were not teachers in the same specialism. Her coach had a whole school role developing instructional coaching and her awareness of that boosted her trust in his methods. In the same way, Daisy admired that her coach was "*so passionate that this [instructional coaching] is the right way to train people*". In both cases, the coaches had perceived expertise in the coaching process, and this encouraged engagement in coaching from the teachers.

The strengthening of bonds across teachers who align on the way they wish to teach, and the way they wish to train teachers, suggests the development of a heterarchy (Peruzzo et al., 2022; Olmedo et al., 2013). The trust in instructional coaching could be seen to be developed through the heterarchy and through role model individuals who embody the benefits of the process. The discourse that pitches instructional coaching as the 'right' way to develop teachers "flows through these new places, gathering pace and support and credibility as it moves" (Peruzzo et al., 2022,

p.12). The role of policy actors in the proliferation of instructional coaching as a training method in England was discussed in chapter 2.

Conversely, the teachers' admiration for their coaches could also emphasise that the coach is at a higher level of expertise and this disparity between skills is what the instructional coaching relationship relies on. The coaches' perceived competence serves to build trust in them (Brky and Schneider, 2002) and potentially makes teachers more receptive to their coaching input. This is in opposition to Nieuwerburgh and Knight's (2012) theory that this "inherit inequality" (p.103) in the relationship would make the teachers less likely to implement the practices suggested.

However, the admiration from teacher to coach, raises questions around whether it serves to create a heterarchy, in which trust is built, and good practice is shared, or whether it strengthens a hierarchy in which instructional coaching as a practice cannot be questioned, because it is seen as common sense and "hyper-rational" (Ball, 2003, p.217).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) states that "when trust is high, newer members of the social system are encouraged to extend trust" (p.24). If new teachers are encouraged to trust instructional coaching, because other members of the school are trusting of it, new teachers may not question their training practices. They will be compliant in the process. However, trusting their coaches and, in turn, the coaching, could also be seen to build a new teacher's sense of belonging; the experiences of the teachers who showed admiration for their coaches suggest it made their teacher training experience more positive.

Though all teachers voiced praise for their coaches' skill as a teacher or coach, Theo also saw that his coach was feeling despondent about teaching, struggling with her mental health and looking to leave the profession. Despite his admiration of her teaching, he was concerned about this role model affecting his career path: "*Am I going to be like this in a year's time? Am I going to be a statistic?*" Theo saw that his coach lacked confidence in coaching, and they did not follow the process as prescribed.

He was also the only teacher who identified that he supported her as much as she supported him. Their relationship could be seen as reciprocal and close to Knight's (2011) "authentic partnership between equals" (p.103) but Theo did not see himself in his coach and he was also the only teacher who did not feel belonging with his coach, stating that "*she would have preferred a female teacher*". They lacked the teacher-coach commonalities of other coaching pairings, discussed in the previous section (p.106), and he saw this as putting a barrier between them.

The teachers' experiences suggest that coach competence is key to building trust in the instructional coaching relationship. However, the definition of competence is created by the new teacher and so coach competence does not necessarily lead to engagement in the instructional coaching process. Coaches are seen as competent by the teacher if they deliver the instructional coaching as prescribed and they are also seen as competent if they divert from the instructional coaching process in line with what is seen as best for the teacher at the time. Coach competence affects the power relations in the relationship and could serve to emphasise the roles of expert and novice. How teachers experience the shifting power relations, as competence levels between teacher and coach shifted, is discussed in the next section.

Hierarchy

In chapter 2, I drew parallels between Foucault's (1973) discussions on the roles of the doctor and the patient in a clinic, and the roles of a coach and teacher in a school. An instructional coach could be seen to treat the teaching as separate from the teacher in the same way that doctors could treat symptoms as separate from the patient. I argue that instructional coaching is built on the assumption that a teacher's practice can be separated from them in order to be 'treated'. There is an inherent hierarchy in the process, in which the coach sits above the teacher as the expert, in the same way that the doctor sits above the patient. The discussion and analysis presented so far in this chapter suggests that the teachers experienced engagement from their coaches on a personal level. Coaches did not separate the teacher from their practice and, in some cases, did not engage in the instructional coaching if not in the best interests of the teacher. However, the teachers' experiences have also highlighted how much power the coaches hold in the relationship and the influence of the coaches' views, professional identities and actions on the teachers' experiences. This section discusses how teachers perceived the power dynamics between themselves and their instructional coach and how this impacted on their experience of the coaching.

Daisy's coach was a senior leader in her school. She was nervous at first, but her coach soon made her feel at ease by listening to her views and showing flexibility. She recalls that, due to room timetabling, their meeting took place in his office at first but "*it felt much more higher stakes for [her] in the deputy head's office*". She raised her discomfort, and the next meeting was in her classroom. Her coach was willing to make a "*change in a way that would benefit [her] practice*". As a non-teacher and senior leader, her coach respected her opinion as a classroom teacher:

Even though it's an expert teacher and a brand-new teacher, they're willing to take on (what you're saying) onboard because you're the only person in your classroom for most of the week.

She advised that *“even if you’ve got that hierarchy [...] don’t let it affect the [coaching] process”*.

Lily was also allocated a coach who was a senior leader and, in their first meeting, she gave an opinion and he responded, *“you’re so right; everything you’re saying is so right”*. This gave her confidence to share her thoughts in the future.

Mia talked about small things that her coach did to make her feel respected as a teacher. She gave the example of her coach *“meet[ing] [her] eye before they approach the class”* as if the coach was seeking non-verbal permission to enter Mia’s classroom. Lily described her relationship with her coach as a *“level playing field”* and Layla described her coaching relationship as a *“tug and pull”*.

There is a danger that instructional coaching, which could be seen as “directive” and “transmissive” (Burger, 2023, p.109), could lead to forced compliance by the teacher (Kemmis et al., 2014). However, the experiences of Mia, Lily and Daisy suggest that the coaches’ skill in levelling *“the playing field”* (Lily) meant that the teachers did not experience a negative impact from the hierarchy.

In contrast, Daisy shared that:

*As an ECT, everyone knows more than me so I’m just like,
‘well [...] this is how it is done then’, which probably isn’t the
way to go about it.*

Daisy had an awareness that she was trusting *“how it is done”* and she suggested a discomfort with that position. Maloch et al. (2025) argue that *“when [coaches] situate themselves as supervisors, they become agents of the system, and the [teachers] are supported for system compliance”* (p.2). Daisy has an awareness that she does not want to be compliant in her coaching but her placement in the school hierarchy, as an ECT, encourages her to comply. However, in the instructional coaching process, the coach can be stipulated to situate themselves as ‘expert’ supervisors and encourage compliance in the process.

Ava experienced the power balance with her coach shifting as her teaching developed. Changes in the school hierarchy added to the shift: *“My deputy for [subject] is my [coach]; she’s supposed to be the next step up.”* As Ava developed, and needed more subject-specific support, she argued that her coach was not equipped to support her; *“I want to be the best [subject] teacher I can be and I’m teaching someone to teach me how to teach.”* In chapter 4, I discussed how teacher engagement with the coaching shifted as their professional identity as a teacher shifted.

In the same way, Sophia identified that the expertise gap between her and her coach closed during their relationship:

He was at the limit of what he could impart to me [...] They need to be better teachers than me and then I will engage [...] As soon as I knew I was as good a teacher, and I could match my [coach]'s GCSE results, my engagement dipped.

Her feelings about her coach's competence shifted along with her feelings about the instructional coaching process: *"once I felt like I was better than it, that's when it stopped"*.

Tschannen-Moran's (2014) theory of trust states that:

Trust is also dynamic in that it can change over the course of a relationship, as expectations are or are not fulfilled and as the nature of interdependence between two people changes (p.19).

Sophia potentially lost trust in her coach and the instructional coaching process when her dependence lessened; she lost faith in her coach's competence, and he failed to fulfil expectations as a coach.

Oliver also had power over how much he engaged with his coaches and the coaching process. He recalls that, with both coaches, they did not follow the prescribed instructional coaching process, which was *"aided and abetted"* by him. His two coaches both had skills and information that would benefit his progress, so he took *"what [he] could from individuals' strengths"*. Being able to verbally manipulate a conversation with his coaches meant that he *"had a lot of power and agency to decide what [he] needed support with"*.

Oliver's experience lies in contrast to the participants in Priestley et al.'s (2015) teacher agency study who *"seemed more likely to go with the flow"* (p.125). The study identified three dimensions which impact on teacher agency and the first of these is how teachers apply their experiences and personal histories to teaching. In this case, Oliver shows agency by applying his experiences of a past teaching career and academic qualifications to his learning. He chose what he wanted to learn, how he wanted to learn it and who he wanted to learn it from. His displays of agency sit in stark contrast to Perryman et al.'s (2017) *"subjects of policy"* (p.765) and Foucault's individual who is *"shot through with modern technologies of power"* (Elliott, 2014, p.109). However, Oliver does not show agency in the instructional coaching process; he shows agency by choosing to develop outside of the process. Oliver's experience correlates with Kelchtermans' (2019) description of early career teacher agency:

[It] not only refers to their capacity to successfully perform particular professional tasks and actions, but equally to the value-laden judgements and sense-making processes informing their practice, as well as their(un)willingness to act in particular ways (p.88).

Oliver is unwilling to engage with instructional coaching at a certain time; he shows agency and again highlights the complexity of the role of the teacher in their own development. His experience of *not* engaging in instructional coaching is as important in this study as other teachers' experiences of engaging in it. Where teachers did not engage in instructional coaching as prescribed, it was, in part, because the teacher, or their coach, were not willing to overcome the discomfort of some elements of the process.

Discomfort

What differentiates instructional coaching from the more traditional observation and feedback model of teacher development is the granular nature of the next steps from the observation, and then the coach modelling, and the teacher practising, these steps outside of a 'live' classroom.

Five of the teachers did not experience the modelling and practice parts of the instructional coaching process as prescribed by their training provider. Oscar shared the conversation he had with his coach after she returned from instructional coaching training:

She said, 'I'm supposed to do this thing where I observe you and I model to you what you're supposed to do in the classroom and then you have a go at modelling it' [...] and we both said, 'no' [...] that was something we said...we explicitly refused to do.

The shift in practice for the coach, from simply feeding back and setting next steps, to having to show the teacher what this looks like in practice (without students present) and then encouraging the teacher to replicate what they had done, was, in some cases, too large a shift.

The "*social awkwardness*" and "*embarrassment*" (Theo) of the modelling and practice parts of the process did not outweigh the potential benefits to their teaching practice. Millie described modelling and practice as "*pretend teaching*"; elaborating that "*it didn't seem real*" and "*a made-up thing to do*". She was only doing it "*because someone said we should*".

Sophia was now also a coach to a trainee teacher. Though the modelling part of the process felt "*over the top*", she knew that, if she missed it out of one instructional coaching session with her new teacher, it was "*a slippery slope*". It could easily get missed out of the process entirely, which she saw as not the best thing for the teacher.

What is of note in Sophia's experience is that she chose not to continue with instructional coaching herself, but she deemed it to be important for the teacher that she was coaching. When she was a teacher in the coaching process, she showed agency in not engaging in the coaching, but, when she

became a coach, she potentially became an “agent of the system” (Maloch et al., 2025, p.2) and encouraged compliance from her trainee teacher.

Daisy, who had two coaches – one who took the modelling and practice seriously, and the other, who did not – raised that these parts of the instructional coaching process had “*inconsistencies with implementation*” and they were much less effective, if they were less “*deliberate*”. In all cases, the coach was the person who decided how seriously the modelling and practice would be taken and the teacher went along with it. Those who had coaches who took it seriously, stated that they benefitted from it. This again highlights the power that the coach holds over the experience of the new teacher.

Teachers described that, when they first started practising in their sessions, it was humorous: George was “*giggly*”, and Mia remembers that she would “*giggle and start again*”. Olivia said that, at the start, she felt “*completely stupid*”. However, once the initial self-consciousness passed, and they took it more seriously, it “*became more of a norm*” (Olivia) and “*useful*” (George).

Mia said it allowed her to “*mentally map out*” what she was doing before she entered the classroom.

Daisy summarised:

To start with, I am doing it, kind of purposefully, and then it is just becoming embedded; [it] triggers in my head naturally – this is the problem that’s coming up and this is the fix.

Noah, a musician, who was used to learning through modelling and practice, said that the best modelling was “*dramatised*” in context, in the teacher’s classroom. This idea of the coach and teacher needing to ‘act’ out techniques with each other was described by Olivia as “*role play*”. She did not find this role play such a leap because, at that point (six weeks into her teacher training), she was “*in continual role play as a teacher*”.

The fact that five of the coaches (and therefore the teachers) did not engage in the modelling and practice part of the instructional coaching process highlights the comfort with a more traditional model of teacher observation and feedback. Hargreaves (2002) argues that “strong professional communities risk” and “trust is the emotional catalyst that makes this unique chemistry possible” (p.404). Bryk and Schneider (2002) state that:

Trust constitutes a calculation whereby an individual decides whether or not to engage in an action with another individual that incorporates some degree of risk (p.14).

To risk engaging in a new professional development activity, and modelling and practising techniques outside of the classroom, new teachers and coaches must trust in the relationship and

the process of instructional coaching. Their lack of engagement in this crucial element of the instructional coaching points to a lack of trust in one of these two areas.

Summary

This chapter has shown how coaches and teachers have built trust in the coaching relationship, even if this is, in some instances, in opposition to trust in the coaching process. The relationship with the coach has been crucial to the teachers' experience of coaching and heavily influenced their engagement, or compliance, in the coaching. The data suggests that even in a hierarchical relationship, teachers can feel agency in that relationship, especially where they felt a 'vibe' with their coach and/or the teacher trusted them as a competent teacher or coach. The data also suggests that there is lack of clarity as to whether the coach always acts in the best interest of the teacher and who is best to decide what is in the teacher's best interests. The next section analyses how the teachers' understanding of their school and policy contexts affected their experience.

CHAPTER 6: New Teacher Experiences of Instructional Coaching – The Influence of Policy

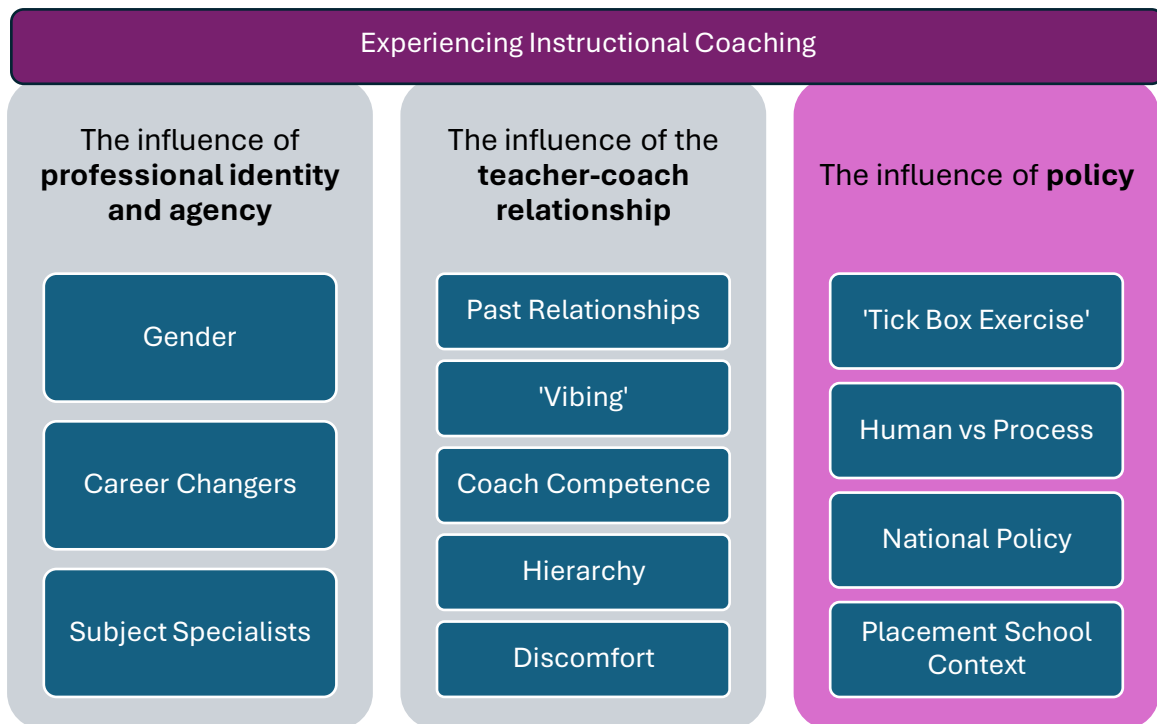


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Individual Teacher Experience and Engagement in Instructional Coaching

Introduction: The New Teacher and Policy Reform

In chapter 2, I argued that instructional coaching has gained popularity as a teacher development tool in a performative culture because it focuses on the performance of the individual. However, the development of instructional coaching raises the conflict of meeting the need of the individual, and the need to universalise new teacher experience (Ball, 2013b) and normalise practice (as discussed in relation to the data in chapter 4). The two previous data analysis chapters have discussed the complexities of how teachers' developing professional identities (Chapter 4), and their relationships with their coaches (Chapter 5), influence their experiences of instructional coaching. This final analysis chapter will discuss how the teachers experienced instructional coaching as a teacher training tool; as part of national policy reform; and in relation to their whole school context.

In chapter 2, I tracked the development of instructional coaching into English teacher training curriculums through complex policy technologies and reforms. In chapter 3 (p.67), I outlined my philosophical assumptions and my belief that instructional coaching is a phenomenon constructed by the teachers, and thus understanding individual teacher experiences is crucial to understanding the phenomenon. I therefore align with Wilkins et al. (2011) who state that:

Teachers bring their own values to bear on the implementation of policy objectives (p.68).

In questioning the structures and assumptions on which the practice of instructional coaching is based in chapter 2 (p.59), I identified a key conflict: the need for teacher training policy reforms to meet the needs of the individual teachers alongside universalising processes and aligning teaching practices towards the normal. This conflict led to me ask my third research question: *How do new teachers experience instructional coaching as a process, in the context of local and national teacher training reforms?* The analysis in this chapter addresses this question.

I argued in chapter 2 that a teacher's role in relation to policy is conflicting and complex: they can be seen as both passive and active in relation to the national and school policy relating to the use of instructional coaching. I argue that, in introducing instructional coaching, policy makers, and those in power, make three assumptions about teachers on which I believe the prevalence of instructional coaching in English teacher training is based. I questioned these assumptions by applying Foucault's ideas around governmentality, technologies of self and the gaze, to education and teacher development, drawing on Ball's interpretations of Foucault. Foucault theorises that individuals are controlled through a process of "silent objectification" (Ball, 2019, p.133) – silent in the fact that those in power use technologies of self to align their needs with those of the individual so that the individual feels they are acting autonomously. Ball (2013b) argues that teachers are "animated rather than constrained" (p.139) through power structures that control the teacher not from above, as government, but from around and within the teacher, as "governance" (Ball, 2008, p.747). Teachers are encouraged to "perform the normal" (Perryman, 2006, p.159) in a performative culture in which the targets are set by those in power.

This chapter is divided into four key themes which influenced how the new teachers experienced, and engaged in, instructional coaching. The first of the themes, 'tick box exercise' analyses how the teachers responded, positively and negatively, to the process of instructional coaching, particularly the recording of their progress through the process.

'Tick Box Exercise'

Teachers shared how their understanding of the instructional coaching process affected their experiences of, and engagement with, instructional coaching. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the versions of instructional coaching experienced by the teachers varied.

Five out of the 15 teachers interviewed stated that they did not follow the instructional coaching process as prescribed by their training provider. Whether or not the teacher received the prescribed instructional coaching is relevant to this section's analysis. When talking about instructional coaching

as a teacher development tool, the teachers who had not received the process as prescribed were talking about their understanding of the process in theory, as opposed to experiencing it in practice.

Teachers talked about two main perceived facets of the instructional coaching process: the clarity and simplicity of the process and the breaking down of teaching practice into smaller parts that can be built on incrementally. I have entitled this section 'tick box exercise' because this phrase was repeated across teachers when discussing their perceptions of the instructional coaching process.

Five of the teachers referred to ticking, checking or clicking boxes when recording their progress through the instructional coaching process. This language aligns with Spencer et al.'s (2017) survey of ECTs in England who found that their professional development was more "orientated towards complying with policy and 'ticking boxes'" (p.43). The teachers had contradictory opinions of the box ticking.

Ellie liked the satisfaction of "*tick box, tick box, tick box*" and the ease of following "*the route we are given*". Two teachers shared that the structure, and 'tick box' nature of instructional coaching, lightened their load. Noah, who received more instructional coaching than any other teacher in the study, said that "*when you are thinking about 1001 different things, you need more scaffolding*" and the coaching provided that structure.

Similarly, Eleanor shared that the simple to follow structure made "*everything much more manageable [...] all I have to do is repeat it and then I'm good*". The sense of achievement gained by completing steps and having a clear process to follow at a particular time, guided by the coach, seemed to be crucial to her progress and her feelings about teaching as a manageable job.

The teachers' alignment with the school and national policy on instructional coaching varies based on their prior experiences and developing professional identities (discussed in chapter 4); the influence of their coach (discussed in chapter 5); and, as discussed in this section, their experiences of the process. The teachers who appeared more central to policy and enjoyed the 'ticking off' of techniques could be seen to be thriving in an "audit culture" (Wilkins, 2010, p.391) which feeds the "tropes of self-improvement" (Perryman et al., 2017, p.755) in a performative culture. They could be working on "uncritical assumptions about 'doing what works'" (Wilkins et al., 2020, p.33) and following their leaders and their coaches in the instructional coaching process.

However, this would be to suggest, as Foucault (2020) does, that individuals cannot act autonomously as they are always under the visible and invisible influence of power structures. This undermines the teachers' experience of the process and suggests that their positive experiences cannot be trusted because of their lack of power in the process.

It may also be the case that the teachers enjoyed the tick box process because of their lack of power within it. Having autonomy in the process may be more effortful than simply following direction from their coach. Wilkins (2020) writes that:

The performative apparatus, and the targets it sets, negates the need for teachers themselves to draw on situated learning and their professional self to develop a rationale for actions; the target is the rationale (p.32).

Accepting the targets set, ticking them off, and moving onto the next one, suggests an ease to training which may be appealing to the busy new teacher.

Daisy, Eleanor and Lily all received the coaching as prescribed, and they all appreciated the clear process of instructional coaching. Lily liked that instructional coaching meant that her training was taken *“more seriously”*; she had *“never had anything as defined”* as the process. Daisy appreciated the rigour of the process, comparing it to more passive instruction she had received in other jobs: *“training was like, ‘watch this video and do it’, which I find really difficult to do”*. Eleanor also appreciated that instructional coaching *“chops it up”*, (*“it”* referring to teaching), and made *“pin pointing”* areas for improvement much easier.

The breaking up of teaching into smaller techniques which can be further broken up so that the techniques can be dissected, modelled, practised, replicated and, possibly, ticked off, is key to the instructional coaching process that the teachers describe. In chapter 2, I discussed the view of teaching as a *“craft”* (Gove, 2013) by policymakers and how this view has informed teacher development policy reform over the last 15 years. If viewed as a craft, expert teaching can be observed, codified and replicated by new teachers. The teachers had contrasting views on whether *‘chopping’* up teaching into techniques (that could be practised), increased or decreased their engagement with instructional coaching.

Though Daisy appreciated the rigour of instructional coaching, she was less sure about the granular target setting and the prescribed ordering of targets. Daisy feared that the *“prescriptive”* nature of target setting in the instructional coaching process meant that she would be focusing on one aspect of her teaching with her coach and this could mean that she *“might miss something glaringly wrong”* elsewhere in her practice. This suggests a tension in teacher development between simplifying the process of teaching, to aid the instruction of new teachers, and recognising teaching’s complexities and how the techniques fit into the bigger picture. As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, it also stresses the tension between creating parity of support across teachers, whilst also meeting their individual

needs, which Ball (2013b) calls the “contradictory bases of uniformity and individuality” (p.47). This is the key conflict on which this chapter’s analysis is based.

Two teachers struggled with Kennedy’s (2014) “dilemma” (p.691) between showing their agency (and disengaging from the coaching) and needing to comply in order to be seen to perform and meet performance measures. They navigated this ‘dilemma’ with tokenistic engagement: Oliver and Oscar did not receive the instructional coaching as prescribed but still completed the recording of the instructional coaching on the online tracking platform. They did this so that their training provider would see them as engaging with the instructional coaching. Engagement in the instructional coaching, and progression through the teaching steps allocated on the online platform, was crucial for the awarding of Qualified Teacher Status and movement through the ECT years. Oscar said that he could:

Sit there and smash out a part on the online platform and then leave it for a month or two.

Similarly, Oliver said that he and his coach could just “*tick these boxes and then chat about our personal lives*”, which he found more important to his development at that time.

Ball (2013b) notes that in performative cultures, teachers “adapt [themselves] to the challenges of reporting and recording [their] practice” (p.138). Ball (2013b) warns that the transferring of accountability data could replace the social structures that are crucial for teacher development (pp.136-7). But Oliver and Oscar found that they could complete both the ticking and the social engagement with their coach simultaneously, by ticking and then chatting. However, their engagement was tokenistic – a necessary compliance in order to become qualified teachers.

Oliver stated that “*you have these tick boxes so it’s easy to assume that progress has been made*”. Ball (2003) also argues that “performativity produces opacity” (p.215) and, in this situation, whether Oliver has made progress in his teaching is unclear. He has seemingly performed through the online platform, but he has not engaged with the coaching. Oliver was sceptical of the developmental gains from just recording his progress online without engaging in the coaching.

Mia and Noah used the word “*granular*” to describe the small targets set by their coach. Their use of the term “*granular*” is important because it shows a shared language with regards to their development and specifically instructional coaching. The term “*granular*” (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2016, p.26) can be tracked back to Bambrick-Santoyo’s 2016 book, ‘Getting Better Faster: A 90-Day Plan for Coaching New Teachers’. As argued in chapter 2, this book was a key publication in the rise of

instructional coaching in England and the teachers' use of language from the book shows its influence.

Noah recognised that instructional coaching provided a *"check list of standardisation"* and that coaching provided techniques and *"teaching that might enable such outcomes"*. Mia perceived that instructional coaching was part of drive to *"make the best better"* through incremental changes to their practice. The teachers showed an understanding of instructional coaching as a practice built on practices that have come before, and they recognised its part in centralising, standardising and universalising teaching methods, to produce higher academic outcomes for students.

Ball (2003) talks about teachers becoming *"adept at presenting ourselves and representing ourselves with this new vocabulary"* (p.218), particularly in a performative culture. Noah and Mia's use of the word *"granular"*, and the performative language of *"standardisation"*, *"outcomes"* and *"better"* show how the new teachers have adopted the language associated with teacher development policy and used that language to talk about their experiences. In a similar way, Lily recognised that instructional coaching was part of a larger movement in teacher training to make methods more *"centralised"* and to create a *"universal experience"* for new teachers.

In chapter 2, I discussed Foucault's use of the panopticon as a metaphor for surveillance of the many by the few in power (Foucault, 1977). I applied this idea to the observation of teachers, as part of their development, to question, and better understand, the ideology on which instructional coaching is based. In this section, the teachers discuss their knowing engagement with the 'tick box exercise' of instructional coaching, particularly when recording their progress through the process. Foucault (2020) writes that in the metaphor of the panopticon, the subjects of the surveillance cannot see who is observing them and so they behave in the way that they believe is expected of them. Eventually, they come to behave in the expected way without the observation:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power [...] he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (pp.202-3)

There were two main responses to the tick box nature of working through the instructional coaching process: On the one hand, some teachers enjoyed the simplicity of the process and found that it reduced their workload. On the other, some teachers seemed to comply with the reporting side of the process so as not be penalised. They spent time on an activity purely for surveillance purposes – so those in power could observe that they were engaging with the process. The teachers who complied tokenistically with the process only did so when they were being observed – when the online platform was tracking their engagement. When they were alone with their coach, they did not

comply with the coaching because they and their coach did not see it as beneficial at that time. Their coach was not part of the surveillance system, which means that they experienced entirely different support and process from those teachers who did comply with the coaching. In order to gain uniformity of process, maybe the teachers and coaches require further surveillance of the in-person instructional coaching in order to comply. However, this may not meet the needs of the individual.

In the final section of this chapter (pp.130-134), I will discuss how new teachers, in schools where instructional coaching is embedded as a whole school practice, possibly experience more surveillance of their engagement with the coaching. In the next short section, I analyse three teachers' experiences of how the uniform instructional coaching processes interacted with the complexities of the individual. This section builds on earlier discussions on how professional identity development (chapter 4) and coaches' adaptations to the instructional coaching process (chapter 5) influenced teacher experience.

Human vs Process

As cited earlier, Ball (2013b) talks about the “contradictory bases of uniformity and individuality” (p.47) in education. Three teachers had thoughts on how the uniformity of the instructional coaching process interacted with the individual teacher. All three teachers were career changers; two of the teachers had master's degrees. This is relevant when looking at the importance of the experience of career changers in this study. Career changers are new teachers who have not joined teacher training straight after their university education, typically at 21 years old. In chapter 4, I discussed how career changers into teaching could be described as “expert novices” (Williams, 2010, p.639) who experience a more profound “praxis shock” (Dadvand et al., 2024, p.485) when they enter teacher training. Given, in some cases, the teachers' experiences of leadership positions in other careers, and advanced academic qualifications, it can be argued that in-school coaches are not well-placed to support career changers (White et al., 2024). As analysed in chapter 4, career changers may also have gained a greater understanding of their developing professional identity and agency in the instructional coaching process and a more developed understanding of their place in the training process.

Oliver argued that instructional coaching reduced the role of the mentor, when they spent most of their time coaching:

*Mentor goes beyond these rigid, evidence-based structures –
we're still humans who need to collaborate, talk, mull over stuff
to other humans [...] teaching is messy and humans are messy.*

It's still a human interaction – teacher training.

Mia had an opposing view to Oliver. She felt that the rigid structure of the instructional coaching meant that she did not have to adapt herself to the process – she did not need to bring any of herself, as an individual, to it:

With the granular things we work on, there's no space for me or who I am [...] it is a very blank slate, [and] I don't have to change who I am to interact with the process.

Mia identifies one of the assumptions on which, I propose, instructional coaching is built: the assumption that teachers practice is a problem and the practice can be separated from the teacher so that it can be 'fixed'. In chapter 2, I aligned this assumption with Foucault's (1973) discussions around the power held by the doctor, treating the ailment as separate from the patient. Foucault (1973) observed that "the patient is only an external fact" in the doctor and patient relationship (p.8). The depersonalisation of treatment can be applied to the treatment of a teacher's practice by the coach, not because patients are directly comparable to teachers, but to better understand the place of teachers, such as Mia and Oliver, in instructional coaching. In the case of Foucault's (1973) doctor and patient, the doctor, as the expert, holds the power to diagnose and treat – the patient, as an individual, is irrelevant to the treatment.

Mia's experience suggests that she liked the instructional coaching process because it separated her from the 'treatment' of instructional coaching. Because everyone's teaching was being 'treated' in the same way, she did not have to engage with the coaching personally. She liked being a "blank slate" because she knew everyone else was receiving the same treatment. She did not see this as limiting her power in the process; in fact, she could continue to be "who I am" alongside the process.

Whereas Oliver argued that coaching could only be personal. Similarly, Olivia stated that her coach delivered instructional coaching "how she is supposed to" but the process is "all very generic and everyone is different". It appeared her coach applied instructional coaching without adapting to Olivia's experience. Her experience chimes with instructional coaching being built on a "deficit model" (Spencer et al., 2017, p.35) of teacher development and on the assumptions made about teachers, proposed in chapter 2 (pp.23-29): in summary, that Olivia's teaching is a continuous series of problems that can be identified through observation and fixed via instruction. Relating this to Foucault's (1973) doctor and patient, there is an assumption that there is an ailment that needs treating.

Spencer et al. (2017), when studying the professional development needs of early career teachers, found that “the complex and nuanced task of developing individuals has been largely replaced with a view of teachers as all doing essentially the same thing” (p.43). Olivier and Olivia argued that every teacher is different and that the process should be adapted for the individual, but Mia preferred the individual to be removed from the process so that everyone experienced the same process.

In the next section, I expand on Oliver’s experience when discussing how the national policy context around instructional coaching influenced his, and another teacher’s, engagement with the coaching.

National Policy

Two of the teachers, both male career changers with qualifications beyond undergraduate level, and experience of teaching prior to teacher training, shared their critiques of instructional coaching as a teacher training method. They were aware that instructional coaching was supported by education policy reform, and part of a step change in how teachers are trained. These views, in turn, affected how they experienced, and engaged with, instructional coaching.

Oscar, who has a doctorate level qualification in education, referred to those in charge of making decisions about teacher training curriculums as “they”. He talked of a “*disconnection*” between “*ground troops*” and “*policy level decisions*”. He was offended by the process treating him “*like an idiot*”. He elaborated on this point:

People who are deciding what the ECTs should be doing have no understanding of the reality of the lived experience of the ECTs and so they, sort of, undermine their own credibility with it.

As opposed to aiding his development, he felt that the introduction of certain teacher training methods, including instructional coaching, was something that he felt oppressed by. He stated that he was struggling to be “*a teacher whilst living under the umbrella of these idiots*” and so he did what he could to “*dodge their nonsense*”. He was aware of the power that the accreditors of QTS and induction had over him and so, as discussed previously, he continued to complete his instructional coaching tasks on the online platform. He stated “*you have to do them once a week or you get in trouble*”.

Perryman (2006) writes that, in a performative culture, teachers “perform accordingly in order to escape the regime” (p.148). Oscar’s opposition to “*them*” – those in power who decide how he is trained – suggest he is visibly performing, by using the online platform, in the hope that he can, more covertly in school, resist their power. Tschannen-Moran (2014) highlights that where trust in policy is absent, teachers and leaders are “likely to divert energy into self-protection and away from

engagement with the learning task” (p.13). Oscar ensures that he does not get “*in trouble*” by complying with the set tasks online but, in agreement with his coach, he does not engage in the instructional coaching. This could be seen as Oscar diverting energy from the learning task.

However, he was moving to a school where he felt he would have to take part in instructional coaching, and he shared that “*part of me is secretly looking forward to it*”. Despite his strong views on the online tracking platform and policy changes, he said that he was not convinced that instructional coaching was a “*waste of time*”. He stated that: “*I’m sure it has come from people with better qualifications, better knowledge than me, thinking very hard and carefully testing things*”.

Oscar’s trust in the instructional coaching process was intertwined with his mistrust of the power structures that he felt were enforcing the coaching. Changes in Oscar’s engagement with instructional coaching over time reinforces the complexity of factors at play in his engagement. At his next school, his professional identity and agency will have developed further; he will have a different relationship with a different coach; and he will be working in a different school context. He suggests that these factors might outweigh the criticisms he has of the policy behind instructional coaching. He summarised: “*It [instructional coaching] occupies those two positions simultaneously at the minute and I’m not sure which one it’s going to turn out to be.*”

Oliver, who holds an education-related master’s, summarised his perception of the policy surrounding instructional coaching as the “*gamification of the teacher evaluation process*”. He compared it to a game, where the score is easy to track, and online platforms make the process engaging and satisfying to work through. He felt that this was an oversimplification of the process of teacher development; he felt that, even though instructional coaching was “*so well-intentioned*”, it relies on a “*pre-supposition that you’re giving a teacher the tools, but humans aren’t as simple as that*”.

Oscar and Oliver both had academic qualifications beyond undergraduate degree level and they may be what Wilkins and Wood (2009) describe as “*inconveniently independent-minded newcomers to the profession*” (p.294) in part influenced by their university education. Neither of the teachers, or their coaches, engaged with instructional coaching as prescribed by their training provider. However, in conflict to what Wilkins and Wood (2009) describe, they did not “*meet with resistance from within*” (p.294). In Oscar’s case, his coach aligned to his thoughts about engaging in instructional coaching. However, the fact that he thought he would engage with instructional coaching when he shifted to a different school context, suggests that his engagement was influenced by his leaders and peers in his school context, despite his strong feelings.

Oscar and Oliver's experiences are in some ways attuned to the experience of the teachers in Ball et al.'s (2011) study whose feelings about policy initiatives came mostly from their colleagues (p.634). In this study, the teachers' experiences of instructional coaching seemed to be highly contingent on how their coaches felt about the process. In Ball et al.'s (2011) study, they found the teachers to mainly be "coping" with and "defending" against policy initiatives (p.632). Though Oscar does cope with, and defend against, instructional coaching, he also engages with the policy from an academic point of view and has an openness to the coaching if the conditions are right.

Oliver and Oscar's understanding of the policy context in which instructional coaching sits suggests that their personal views on how the teaching profession is perceived and how it develops through policy, directly affected their engagement with the coaching. In the next section, the influence of the wider adoption of instructional coaching in a new teacher's school will be discussed.

Placement School Context

Five of the teachers talked about the use of instructional coaching in their schools for all staff, not just for those in training. These five teachers all received the instructional coaching as prescribed by their training provider. Four out of these five teachers spoke positively about instructional coaching in their school, suggesting a link between the whole school adoption of instructional coaching and the new teachers' positive experiences and engagement with the coaching.

Noah received the most instructional coaching of all the teachers. He gained it separately from his coach, his training provider and whole school. He talked enthusiastically about the plethora of coaching in his context and that, in his school, the expectation is that "*everyone should be super positive*". He felt that mentor time should be dedicated to coaching, as opposed to more pastoral support, which might encourage talking about "*negative stuff*". He talked of the importance of taking "*yourself out of the picture*" when it came to teacher development and that one of his school mantras was "*team over the individual*".

Noah's experience of the whole school instructional coaching in his context echoes the assumptions, proposed in chapter 2 (pp.25-31), on which I argue instructional coaching is built: that teachers require continuous improvement and that they can be separated from their practice so that it can be improved.

Noah's view contrasts with the new teachers surveyed by Spencer et al. (2017) who felt there was a "need for emotional support" (p.42) in their training. Noah's description of pastoral support as "*negative*" and in conflict with the need to be "*positive*" in his school suggests that emotional support for the individual is lacking but he is not in need of that support.

Similarly, Lily noted that, in her school, instructional coaching was a *“big thing”*. She *“loved taking it more seriously”* and she spoke positively about the process. Like Noah, Eleanor also talked about mantras at her school: *“they always say, ‘you can only get better if you want to get better’”*. She described herself as an *“advocate”* for instructional coaching because of the *“big influence”* it had had on her teaching.

Ava said that her senior leaders had taken a more exploratory approach to embedding instructional coaching. When it was introduced to her, she was told, *“‘This is how we are going to do it for now – if it doesn’t work, it doesn’t work’”*. She had faith in the leader who had introduced coaching, adding *“he would have researched it”*. Ava’s leader echoes the policy actors discussed in chapter 2, who translate and disseminate policy reforms, such as instructional coaching. As Ball (2003) argues *“policies of reform produce new kinds of teacher subjects”* (p.217) and Ava’s leader could be one of these subjects.

Wilkins et al. (2020) might argue that the faith that Ava has in her leader is *“founded on uncritical assumptions about ‘doing what works’”* (p.33). But Ava’s faith in her leaders, and the methods they had prescribed, provided her with comfort and a growing sense of confidence in her own abilities. She said that the coaching had created a culture that was *“really open”* and *“reassuring”*. She felt as a trainee receiving coaching that she was *“not alone”* and that her head-start in coaching, as part of her training route, had meant that she was *“almost a bit of an expert”*.

As discussed in chapter 5, in relation to the teacher-coach relationship, bonds across teachers and leaders grow in a heterarchy (Peruzzo et al., 2022; Olmedo et al., 2013), in which role model individuals embody the ‘right’ way to train teachers. In Ava, Noah, Lily and Eleanor’s schools, instructional coaching seems to have gathered *“pace and support and credibility as it moves”* (Peruzzo et al., 2022, p.12). Ball (2008) argues that this is a way to achieve *“political ends through different means”* (p.748). However, it is unclear whether the teachers and leaders are acting agentively or are controlled by technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988), using the *“mechanisms of self-monitoring”* (Chiang et al., 2024, p.1) prevalent in a performative culture.

Olivia was compliant in the instructional coaching process, working in a school that adopted instructional coaching whole school, despite internally questioning how she felt about it. She shared:

*‘Trust the process’ - that’s the favourite phrase of everyone [...]
I don’t want to trust the process; that’s not me.*

Her rejection of what *“everyone”* else was saying about the process of instructional coaching suggests that it had become part of the *“common sense”* discourse (Biesta, 2017, p.437) in which it

is seen as the 'right' way to train teachers in her school. Olivia is therefore in a context in which "everyone" trusts the process of instructional coaching and she feels a discomfort with trusting blindly; it misaligns with what she believes herself to be. The conflicts involved in the new teacher's developing professional identity were discussed in chapter 4.

Olivia's experience suggests that trust may not be needed in an instructional coaching relationship to secure her participation. As Kennedy (2014) argues: "compliance and uniformity" (p.691) are rewarded in a performative culture, but Olivia sees herself outside of her context – in contrast to "everybody" else. Little (1993) states that good professional development equips teachers with the skills to become "shapers, promoters and well-informed critics of reforms" (p.130). Instructional coaching, as a form of professional development, did not encourage critique from Olivia, though she is quietly critical of it; the process could be seen to encourage compliance, rather than critique and, if teachers are critical, they do not share it with their leaders. Wilkins and Wood (2009) argue that,

Professional values and practices based on critical enquiry will challenge and undermine the central functionalism of the mechanism (p.294).

Olivia's experience shows that new teachers can feel strongly against the instructional coaching process but this does not affect their compliance. Olivia could be seen to be in the "struggle between social fear and professional fear" (Seiki, 2020, p.2). Her social fear comes from being surrounded by others who "trust the process" and her professional fear is that she will not progress as a teacher if she does not "trust the process".

Oliver and his coach did not engage in instructional coaching in his school, but he argued that the process of passing expertise from coach to teacher was an "ancient" way of teaching new skills:

It's how we teach so it's how we should be taught, I guess [...] It's an ancient, didactic way of teaching, isn't it? Apprentice – mentor, Jedi – Padawan. It's not really instructional coaching – it's how humans have learnt since we've had verbal reasoning skills.

Similarly, Mia saw instructional coaching as an old practice rebranded from other disciplines: "it's what's been going on in [English as a Foreign Language] for decades [...] present, practice, produce". Both teachers cite a version of "learning as acquisition" (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005, p.111) where the novice acquires the necessary skills from the expert.

Like the teachers in Olivia's school, Oliver and Mia possibly see instructional coaching as part of a "hyperrational" (Ball, 2003, p.217) narrative about what works in teacher training. However, in conflict to what Sullivan et al. (2020) argue, Oliver does not "'fall in line' with prevailing educational

orthodoxies” (p.395). This suggests that, even if teachers understand, and accept, the principles underlying instructional coaching, they still may not have trust that it is the right method for their development at certain points in certain contexts.

Oliver reflected that he could have been “*a somewhat better teacher sooner*” if he and his coach had participated in the coaching. But the payoff of the time spent engaging in instructional coaching, for the gain in his teaching, was not worth it for him. Sophia also did not think that she had been damaged developmentally by not fully engaging in the instructional coaching:

If I'd taken it seriously and respected it, I probably could be incrementally better [...] but a lot better? No, and was I absolutely fine doing the bare minimum of it? Also yeah.

The use of the word “*incrementally*” chimes with the use of the word “*granular*” (Mia) as it is also used by Bambrick-Santoyo (2016). Both Oliver and Sophia questioned the benefits of coaching for them and concluded that the gains would not outweigh the time they would lose from their teaching day. As Oliver summarised: “*all the things in good faith, fall apart when the school day occurs*”.

The mismatch between instructional coaching – the focus on one discrete part of teaching practice – and the realities of teaching lessons in their school context, meant that four teachers voiced that the addition of instructional coaching was frustrating, overwhelming and, in some cases, unmanageable in their context.

Oscar said that “*the reality of things resulted in it never actually happening*”. Theo also did not receive instructional coaching as prescribed, stating that: “*it's not my priority because I am very busy*”. Though Noah stated that the coaching was for a “*good cause*” and part of a whole school focus on coaching, he said that there was “*a lot of duplication*” and that he and his coach were trying to “*claw back time so we can focus on running our department*”.

Layla asked me, “*‘death by coaching’ – have you heard that term?*” in relation to the negative impact of coaching on new teachers at her school: “*If it's too much for a kid at period six on a Wednesday, it's too much for an adult after all that.*” Olivia also related her learning to that of a child, noting that she was surprised how “*strange*” it was that her training providers and school leaders had not thought about her workload when planning the course:

We talk about the cognitive overload for children and then, for the first three weeks of my training, I had so much in my head, I felt sick.

She felt the pressure of getting up-skilled in so many different things, so quickly: *“just when you think you’re on top of something, another thing is thrown at you”*. Olivia voiced that she was having things *“thrown”* at her by both her school context and her training provider.

Summary

The teachers’ experiences of instructional coaching as a teacher training tool, in the national and school-level context, highlight teachers’ complex relationship with policy reform. Their differing responses to the ‘tick box’ exercise of recording their progress show that the teachers are aware of the surveillance and tracking of their practice and welcome or reject it. Whether those teachers who welcome it are acting with agency or are acting under the control of invisible power structures highlights the teachers’ active and passive role in relation to the policy and process surrounding coaching.

However, it is clear that the teachers cannot entirely escape the gaze of their training providers, and the policy they are enacting. Some teachers (notably those with qualifications beyond undergraduate level) engaged tokenistically with recording their progress to play the ‘game’, gain a qualification and eventually, “escape the regime” (Perryman, 2006, p.148). This tokenistic engagement, and disengagement from the face-to-face coaching (in favour of getting on with the job of teaching or gaining more pastoral support), was only permitted by teachers who were not working in a school with a whole school focus on coaching. Where coaching was adopted by coaches and leaders, teachers, despite reservations and developed opinions on instructional coaching, continued with the coaching. This suggests that teacher trust in the process is not needed for the process to continue.

In the next chapter, I will synthesise the conclusions from the past three analysis chapters in relation to my research questions. I will also cite the limitations of my research and make recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter is split into three sections: The first section provides a summary of my study and its aims. I then synthesise my key findings and confirm the original contribution to the existing body of knowledge made in my study in relation to the coaching of new teachers. In the final section, I reflect on the limitations of my study, and I make recommendations for future research in this area.

Study Summary

This study aimed to better understand new teachers' experience of instructional coaching as part of their teacher training in England. The study provides an original contribution to knowledge because, despite the widespread use of instructional coaching across English teacher training curriculums in the last five years, the experience of the individual teacher has not been researched. The literature reviewed presents conflicts which I raised in my introduction in chapter 1; discussed in my literature review in chapter 2; and informed the development of my research questions in chapter 3. These conflicts are organised into three interconnected levels based on Bryk and Schneider's (2002) three levels of trust in schools. (summarised in Table 1).

Relations on three levels (Bryk and Schneider, 2002)	Conflicts	Key Subjects in the Literature	Research Questions
Intrapersonal	Coaching requires individual compliance and agency	Teacher professional identity Teacher agency	How do new teachers experience agency and professional identity development in instructional coaching?
Interpersonal	Coaching relationships are trusting and hierarchical	Teacher collegial relations Teacher mentoring	How do new teachers experience the relationship with their instructional coach ?
Organisational	Coaching processes are universal and individual	Teachers and policy reform Hierarchies and heterarchies	How do new teachers experience the instructional coaching process , in the context of local and national teacher training reforms?

Table 1: Key Conflicts and Research Questions

I opened chapter 1 of this thesis by recounting my observation of a coaching interaction at Relay Graduate School of Education. The lack of clarity surrounding the teacher's role in the coaching interaction, and how trust presented itself in such interactions, served as the catalyst for this study, which aims to better understand the teacher experience. I argue that instructional coaching has proliferated in a performative culture; I used the ideas of Foucault (1973, 1988, 2020) and Ball, (2003, 2013a, 2013b, 2019; Chiang et al., 2024) to propose and question three assumptions made about teachers by policy makers and educational leaders. I argue that these assumptions have encouraged the development of practices such as instructional coaching, without the need to better understanding the experience of the teacher. I propose that teachers are assumed, in a performative culture and neoliberal ideology, to be passive subjects of policy reform and that their teaching requires constant improvement and observation to inform that improvement.

As my study focuses on understanding the experience of the phenomenon of instructional coaching through the eyes of the teachers involved, I take a qualitative approach to the research and used semi-structured interviews with individual new teachers as my sole data collection method. I used convenience sampling to interview 15 teachers who, in their ITT or ECT years, were required to engage in coaching with their mentor as an element of their teacher training. Pilot interviews helped me to refine my interview questions and showed that participants were needed who had been prescribed similar versions of instructional coaching, to increase the validity of my data. Given the multifarious definitions of instructional coaching, I used their familiarity with an image (Figure 1) at the start of the interview to ensure our definitions aligned.

Throughout the study and the writing up of the thesis, I was aware of my position in the research and, though I do not believe that I can remove myself from the data collection and analysis (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p.157), I can "reveal my sources of bias" (Thompson, 2000, p.137) and aim to reduce them. One source of bias was my position as an "indigenous insider" (Banks, 1998, p.8) to some of the research participants – those who teach English in a secondary school and who were known to me before the study. In my ethical considerations, I acknowledge my biases and my obligation to treat participants fairly. I also made research design choices to limit harm to my participants, their coaches and their placement schools. Later on in this chapter, I reflect on my emerging researcher identity and how shifts in positionality impacted on the research and may impact on the future dissemination of my research.

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2017) was used to identify themes across the interview data and these themes are summarised in Figure 2. The sub-themes were identified as key factors that influenced the teachers' experiences of instructional coaching and their level of engagement

with the coaching. The sub-themes are grouped into three overarching themes in line with my conceptual framework outlined in chapter 2, which informed my research questions (Table 1). The key findings from the data are summarised in the next section in line with the three themes identified in my conceptual framework and data analysis.

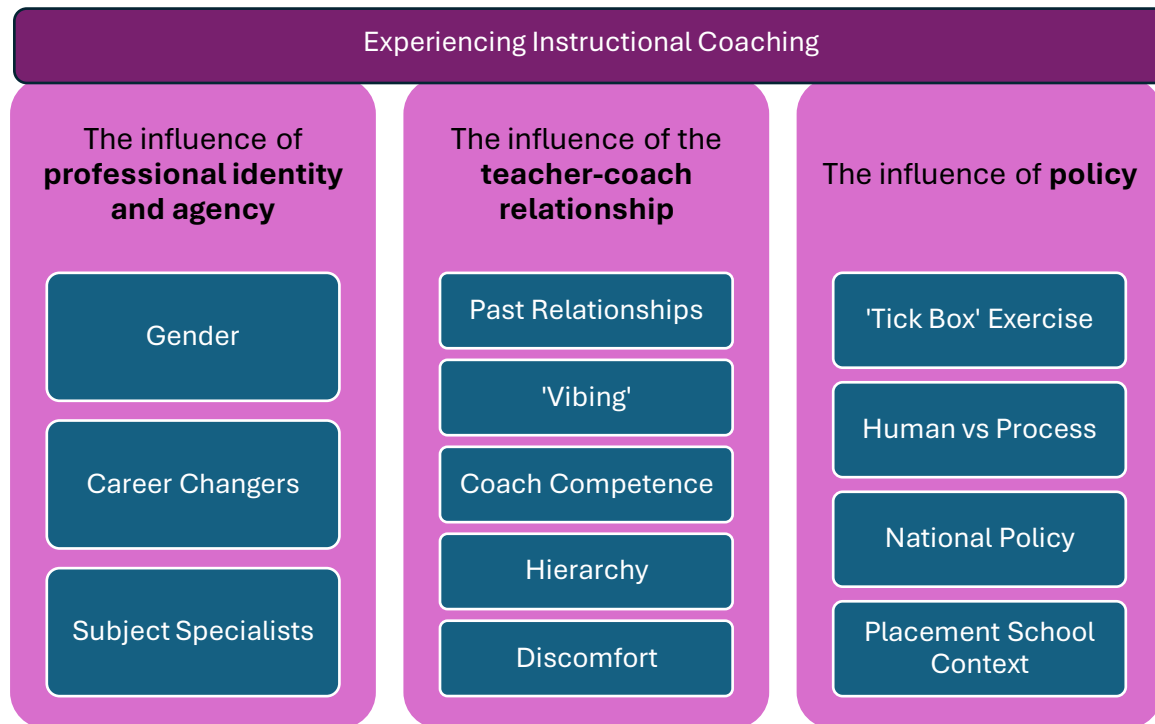


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Individual Teacher Experience and Engagement in Instructional Coaching

Key Findings

I have examined new teacher experience of instructional coaching on three levels, based on Brky and Schneider’s (2002) three levels of trust development in schools: at the level of the individual teacher – the intrapersonal; their relationship with their coach – the interpersonal; and the context in which the coaching sits – the organisational (Table 1). This section provides a synthesis of the key findings from the data on these three levels in answer to my three research questions. My aim in sharing key findings, as stated in chapter 3, is to highlight the importance of new teachers’ individual experiences whilst also making “tentative generalisations” (Pring, 2009, p.119) across their experiences.

Research Question One: How do new teachers experience agency and professional identity development in instructional coaching?

In chapter 2, I argued that instructional coaching takes a deficit view of teacher development (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005; Spencer et al., 2017; Sullivan et al., 2020) building on an

assumption by policy makers in a performative culture that teachers practice is a problem that requires continuous improvement (Ball, 2013a; Perryman et al., 2017).

In a deficit view of teacher development, teachers can be viewed metaphorically as 'blank slates'. This view encourages compliance in the instructional coaching process as the new teacher's past skills and experiences are wiped from the 'slate' to train them as teachers. However, the literature argues that agency development is crucial to new teachers' wider development as teachers (Sullivan et al., 2020; Wilkins et al., 2011), which creates a "dilemma" (Kennedy, 2014, p.691) when implementing initiatives, such as instructional coaching. New teachers need to develop agency in order to engage with the teacher professional over the long term, but they also need to show a level of compliance and acceptance of their training and development. A new teacher's agency development can be seen as the power they have over their developing professional identities, which are informed by their experiences (Buchanan, 2015; Clarke, 2009) and influenced by the structural forces in place in their context (Lasky, 2005; Priestley et al., 2015; Solari & Ortega, 2016). If they are viewed as 'blank slates' then their developing professional identities are not seen to be informed by their prior experiences, and this may, in turn, also limit their agency development which is important for their development as teachers.

The data suggests that a teacher's gender, subject specialism, past experiences and whether they changed careers to become a teacher, influenced their experience of instructional coaching. These factors contributed to the developing professional identities of the new teachers, and they brought these professional identities with them into teaching, even if they were not acknowledged by their coaches. Theo and Lily talked explicitly about how their sex and gender impacted on their experience. Theo felt that being a "*male stereotype*" meant that the "*more you tell me, the less I want to do*". He saw instructional coaching as being told what to do and so, along with his coach, rejected it as a method that would be helpful to him. Lily, who has a degree in neuroscience, engaged with the coaching because she "*needed structure*". She said, "*it's just the kind of person I am*".

Teachers aligned their developing professional identities with the aims and processes associated with instructional coaching – they took "actions that they believe align with [their professional identity] construction (Buchanan, 2015, p.704). Notably in three cases, if they were younger, female, and taught science (Eleanor, Lily and Ellie), the data suggests that their developing professional identities aligned with the structure and aims of instructional coaching. For example, Lily aligned her identification as a high-achieving female with being a "*perfectionist*" and so moving through the "*steps*" in the instructional coaching process aligned with her understanding of her developing

professional identity. The “tropes of self-improvement” (Perryman et al., 2017, p.755) may chime more heavily with this group. The neoliberal view of agency focuses on the power of the individual to improve themselves, regardless of the structural conditions surrounding them. In this view individuals are “self-directing, self-regulating, self-determined, autonomous, accountable” (Miller, 2016). The young, female science teachers in the study aligned their developing professional identities more with this view of agency, being a “perfectionist” for example, and this affected their engagement with the coaching.

If the teachers saw that their developing professional identities did not align with the coaching (Oliver and Oscar) then, with their coaches, they disengaged from the coaching. Oliver stated that: *“Instructional coaching is designed for your tabula rasa – your blank student.”* Oscar said that it was *“designed for people fresh out of uni”*. Olivia said that trusting the process of coaching was *“not me”* and yet she remained compliant in the process because her coach took part in the coaching *“all how she is supposed to.”* In all cases, if their coach, or their school context, sat in contrast to their view of the coaching, then they remained compliant in the process. This is a key finding which will be discussed in relation to research question three.

Career changers (9 out of the 15 teachers) arose as a key group of interest in the study because their understanding of their developing professional identities and agency in the instructional coaching process appeared more established than the younger new teachers. This understanding impacted on their engagement with the coaching process. Career changers from outside education (George, Noah, Olivia) came to the process with an understanding of how to engage in a learning process. For example, Noah saw the need for *“deference”* early in the learning process. All three teachers engaged with the coaching and saw the benefits of it. They appreciated the expertise of their coaches.

Olivia showed compliance, as opposed to engagement, in the instructional coaching which may have been because she was only six weeks into her training at the time of interview. It may also have been because of the lack of commonalities and ‘vibe’ with her coach, which limited her ability to be agentive in the relationship. Noah and George worked with their coach to move to more *“self-directed mentoring”* and more of a *“back and forth”* as the process continued. Olivia potentially had not reached that stage.

Careers changers from inside education (Eleanor, Layla, Mia, Oscar, Oliver, Theo) were split down the middle in terms of their engagement with the instructional coaching process. As stated before, Oliver, Theo and Oscar (and their coaches) did not engage in the coaching but all voiced that this was the best thing for their development at the time. Their coaches all had faith in their abilities, maybe as *“expert novices”* (Williams, 2010, p.639), and so the coaching was not seen as crucial for their

development. All three spoke directly or indirectly about their developing agency in the process and their choice not to engage. Oliver stated: *“I had a lot of power and agency to decide what I needed support with”*.

Eleanor, Layla and Mia engaged in the coaching willingly and felt that the coaching suited them. They all talked about how the coaching had been adapted for their needs because they had shared information about themselves with their coaches. This information sharing helped their coaches to better understand their individual needs. They showed a high level of professional confidence in their engagement with their coaches and the coaching process.

Fox (2020) argues for the development of an “activist teacher identity” (p.48) which questions and critiques the influences of performativity on teaching. But, in their systematic review of the literature on career changer experiences, Hogg et al., (2023) conclude that teacher training must help career changers to “see learning as a positive professional trait” (p.12). This conclusion suggests a need to encourage teachers to identify as “positive” learners as part of the development of their professional identity, which presents a dilemma for new teachers: if they disengage from the instructional coaching process and “speak back against educational policies” (Reeves, 2018, p.106), then they can be seen as activist and ‘negative’; they can also be seen as resisting learning and limiting their development as professionals. This dilemma is reminiscent of Theo’s comments that *“everyone should be super positive”* in his school and that pastoral support in mentor meeting time might be seen to encourage *“negative stuff”*. If new teachers’ professional identity development, and therefore their developing agency, is suppressed in the coaching process, they may be in danger of being no more than “willing performers” (Fox, 2020, p.49) in their professional development.

The new teachers’ experiences of instructional coaching suggest that teacher educators need to: “try to incorporate what we know about the contexts and communities and their influence on the shaping of teacher identities into our teacher education programmes to prepare new teachers for the challenges of developing strong professional identities in positive ways. (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p.186).

The findings suggest that new teachers bring perceptions of their developing identities and agency into teacher training which influence how they experience instructional coaching. There are certain facets of their developing identities (such as identifying as stereotypically male or as a natural scientist) that can help to provide tentative generalisations of experience across new teachers. Certain groups, such as career changers, with more developed past professional identities may be better prepared for how to navigate their engagement and agency within initiatives, such as instructional coaching. However, the findings suggest that without understanding, or

acknowledgement, of an individual new teacher's developing identities and agency in the process, what the new teacher positively brings to the experience can be overlooked or lost.

Research Question Two: How do new teachers experience the relationship with their instructional coach?

The relationship between new teacher and coach is unique and complex in a school; the relationship is "contrived" (they are told to work together) but it is also hierarchical and transactional - the coach has a role in providing supporting evidence for a teaching qualification. The challenges of assimilating the coach's role as both supporter and assessor makes this relationship "ambivalent" (Hobson et al., 2009, p.315; Maué et al., 2024, p.228) in that the relationship is required to fulfil seemingly conflicting requirements. Trust is therefore desired to bring stability to the ambivalent and crucial relationship (Gardiner, 2012; Cameron & Grant, 2017; Boguslav, 2024). However, in a performative culture there is a danger that:

The trust and understanding embedded in local cultures of knowledge and experience is replaced by a web of accountability established through imposed contracts and performance standards" (Hargreaves, 2002, p.404).

In the cases where the coaches engaged with the instructional coaching, the coaches showed great skill in building trust alongside holding the hierarchical roles of instructor and monitor. Coaches built trust whilst (and through) following the instructional coaching process as prescribed. However, other coaches built trust through adapting the process for the perceived needs of the teacher; and others built trust by disengaging from the process entirely.

The relationship with the instructional coach is hierarchical – novice and expert; assessed and assessor; student and teacher. Even within this power imbalance, the teachers all expressed some level of positivity about the relationship with their coaches. Coaches made moves to 'flatten' this hierarchy by showing consideration of the new teachers' views. None of the new teachers negatively experienced their coaches' hierarchical power over them in terms of the coach being higher than the teacher in the school hierarchy. Most pairs during the instructional coaching (or mentoring interactions if they did not engage in the coaching) seemed to operate in more of a heterarchy (Peruzzo et al., 2022; Olmedo et al., 2013), which sat outside the normal school hierarchies. Though they did recognise that the coaches were more competent than them and sat above them in this sense, this imbalance served to increase their engagement with their coach as an 'expert'.

From the teachers' perspective, positive coach pairing was down to 'luck'. Despite a lack of deliberate pairing between teacher and coach based on shared commonalities, eight of the teachers saw commonalities between themselves and their coach. The perceived commonalities built understanding, empathy and trust. I have repurposed the term "vibing" (Eleanor) to summarise the bond created by these shared commonalities. In the cases where teachers vibed with their coaches, they shared examples of being more agentic and the process appeared to be more closely adapted to their professional practice needs.

The notable commonalities that bonded teacher and coach were being working parents (Oscar, Oliver, Mia); sharing similar views about the instructional coaching process (Eleanor, Oscar, Millie); sharing past and present barriers to learning and progression (George, Layla, Ellie); and sharing hobbies (George).

All teachers spoke positively about their coaches but not all of them 'vibed'. Olivia respected her coach's teaching skills and felt that she was making progress as a teacher, but her coach was much younger, and without children of her own, and Olivia felt "*inferior*" and that there was "*no respect there*". Theo's coach was of a different age and gender and he felt stereotyped and even feared in the relationship. Olivia received too much instruction from her coach; Theo received too little. Without the 'vibe', communication was stunted, and they did not engage with their coach as an individual. This points to a need to more carefully pair teachers and coaches by better understanding and exemplifying what constitutes a 'vibe' between colleagues and specifically between teacher and coach in a coaching relationship.

The data suggests that vibing did not always lead to the professional development of teaching practice. Three coaches did not deliver the coaching because of a misplaced trust in the new teacher's teaching (Oscar, Theo); a lack of time for observation of their teaching (Oliver, Theo, Oscar); and a lack of confidence (Theo).

Importantly, the experiences of Oscar and Oliver (the most vocal opponents to receiving instructional coaching as prescribed) showed that they either valued, or had the potential to value, coaching when not delivered by their current coach in their current context. This example highlights that their views on the coaching process were entangled with their coaches' views of the coaching process. Sophia disengaged from the coaching when she believed that she stopped gaining value from it, but she was keen to engage in vigorous coaching in a context, and with a coach, where she felt she would receive more challenge. Again, her views of instructional coaching came from her experience with her specific coach. All three teachers were open to instructional coaching from different coaches in different contexts.

Collaboration between teachers is important for their professional development (Hargreaves, 2019). However, if relationships are forced or “contrived” (Hargreaves and Dawes, 1990, p.239), in that teachers are told who to work with – deliberately paired - there is a danger of teachers ‘going through the motions’ as opposed to organically, collaboratively “tinkering” (Huberman, 1992, p.131) with their practice. The relationship between coach and teacher is ‘contrived’ in that new teachers are told who to work with and what to work on. In an instructional coaching relationship, the way the coach interacts with the teacher is specified and guided by the training provider and this, again, adds complexity, and potentially constraints, to the relationship. Maué et al. (2024) summarise that the work of the coach is “determined by structurally conditioned contradictions” (p.226) which in turn affect the relationship between teacher and coach.

In a performative culture, if the relationship is too constrained by policy and a need for uniformity, then the new teachers may gain a narrow conception of what it means to be a good teacher (Devos, 2010; Rippon and Martin, 2003). However, without any structure to the teacher-coach relationship, the teacher may not gain the support they need and there may be inequity across the coaching that new teachers receive (Clark and Byrnes, 2012).

The data showed how coaches and teachers can tokenistically engage with the coaching, through tracking their progress online, while not progressing through the coaching in reality. There are ways to, in Oscar’s words, “*dodge their nonsense*” and “perform accordingly in order to escape the regime” (Perryman, 2006, p.148). This questions whether coaches and new teachers understood the reasoning behind the coaching or whether they were simply presented with a training method which they could not attach any value to. The fact that only five teachers consistently received the modelling and practice parts of the instructional coaching process (the five teachers whose placement schools used instructional coaching school-wide) suggests that high levels of trust are needed for teachers and coaches to take risks (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). When a teacher and a coach are alone in a room, trust is needed between them to engage in new practices such as instructional coaching (especially when the practice involves activities such as practice of a teaching technique without an actual class present).

This study suggests that the in-school mentor, acting as instructional coach, has power over what version of instructional coaching the new teacher receives. This is seen across the 15 teachers with coaches adapting the process, or disengaging from the process, to varying degrees. The power of the coach has been recognised in recent educational policy reform by the increase in standardisation and monitoring of mentoring (Department for Education, 2025), as examined in chapter 2.

Seven of the teachers highlighted the positive relationship with their coach by comparing it to negative past relationships with support roles in their teacher training. This suggests that teachers became more adept at building relationships with the coaches, the further they went into their teacher training. They became more trusting of support roles (such as their coach); more able to identify commonalities (as opposed to differences); and thus more able to 'vibe' with their coaches, despite the lack of deliberate pairing on behalf of leaders. The fact that seven of the teachers spoke about negative relationships with support early in their teacher training, suggests that the new teachers needed better preparation for building relationships with their mentor, especially when their mentor was taking on the 'role' of coach.

Research Question Three: How do new teachers experience the instructional coaching process, in the context of local and national teacher training reforms?

The conclusions thus far have shown that skilled coaches can adapt the instructional coaching for the needs of the individual. This is aided by teachers, notably career changers, showing agency and sharing information with their coaches that provides an insight into their developing professional identities. Teachers showed a varying awareness of their developing professional identities and agency in the process, and the impact of their relationship with their coach, on their experience. What also influenced their experience was their understanding of instructional coaching as a process that sat outside, alongside or inside, their whole school practices and as a part of English teacher training reform.

Whether or not the new teacher's coaching sat within a whole school practice of instructional coaching was the biggest driver of teacher engagement with the coaching. If their instructional coaching sat as part of a whole school practice of coaching, then the teachers responded positively to the coaching (Lily, Noah, Ava, Daisy and Eleanor) and received all elements of the process as prescribed by their training providers. Eleanor talked of the satisfaction and simplicity of the 'tick box' process. Daisy appreciated how seriously their coaches engaged in the process, notably the "*embarrassing*" practice part. In contrast to the participants in Ball et al.'s (2011) study, these new teachers were not "coping" with, and "defending" (p.632) against, policy initiatives. They appreciated the simplicity of the process and their coaches' commitment to the coaching not just with them, but whole school.

These teachers could be described as "neo-performative" (Wilkins et al., 2011, p.35) in that they have grown up in a performative culture that rewarded them for their compliance and achievement in that culture. But to undermine their engagement in the instructional coaching process and label it as 'compliance' as opposed to the more agentic 'engagement' may be to undermine their

experience and discredit their developing agency in engaging in the coaching. It would be to agree that teachers are “merely passive conduits of policy” (Wilkins et al., 2011, p.68). Their engagement with the coaching could be part of the process of developing agency and, as they develop, they may break from the “dominant discourses” (Popper-Giveon and Shayshon, 2016, p.534) around instructional coaching in their context. However, as stated in response to my first research question above, teacher agency in coaching can be interrogated in a performative culture where a new teacher’s developing professional identity is moulded by the neoliberal context.

If the new teacher was in a placement school where instructional coaching was only used as part of teacher training, then the teachers and coaches had more flexibility as to whether they engaged or not. There was less whole school accountability but also fewer ‘policy actors’ (Braun et al., 2010; Ball et al., 2011) - key teachers and leaders expounding instructional coaching as a desirable method for developing teachers. This meant that individual teachers were more influenced by their own, and their coaches’, views of the policy surrounding instructional coaching.

Again, career changers had the most developed views on where instructional coaching fit into teacher training reform and their views on this directly influenced their engagement with the coaching. However, if their views conflicted with their coaches, as in the case of Olivia and her coach, the coaching continued regardless of her views. Sophia and Oscar showed that, however negatively the teacher felt about the policy surrounding coaching, the teacher was still willing to engage with the coaching in a different school context (Williams and Presage, 2002).

Teachers raised that when they went beyond developing gateway skills such as behaviour management, and they started to want subject specific coaching, the universal process – the ‘tick box’ exercise - did not meet their needs. As teachers developed as key stage or subject specialists, there was a desire to digress from the process. Some coaches had the specialist knowledge to meet their needs but, in most cases of teachers beyond their first year of training, the teachers continued with the process begrudgingly. The teachers seem to ‘outgrow’ the instructional coaching process when their teaching reached a certain level of competence.

The current metaphor in the English education system of the “golden thread” (Department for Education, 2022) running through a teacher’s development, from teacher to trust leader, shows the efforts by policy makers to universalise the experience for teachers. However, in the case of instructional coaching, if the teacher receives the training as intended by the policy makers, and designed by the training providers, and delivered by the placement school, then there is a danger of universal experience outweighing individual experience. But, if the school, and the coach in school, does not deliver the training as prescribed then there is a danger that individual experience

outweighs universal experience and leads to inequity of support across new teachers. This conflict is Ball's (2013b) "contradictory bases of uniformity and individuality" (p.47). However, what this study has shown is that, aside from the case of Olivia, if the new teachers see that the process does not suit their individual needs, they voice it – they are not passive subjects in the process. Their coaches also adapt the process to suit their individual needs. This has, in five cases, meant the coach and the teacher not engaging in the coaching at all, showing a lack of trust in the process and the surrounding policy. However, three of these teachers shared that, in a different context, they would engage with the instructional coaching, suggesting that school context has the most powerful influence over whether a teacher engages with instructional coaching. The teachers do not need to trust the process themselves; they imbibe the trustingness of their peers. As Bryk and Schneider observe, "when trust is strong, individual engagement with reform does not feel like a heroic call to action" (p.33).

Original Contribution to Knowledge

This study has drawn conclusions about the new teacher experience of instructional coaching as an element of their teacher training in England, which had not been researched before. In chapter 2, I traced the development of instructional coaching, which provides an original narrative of how instructional coaching proliferated in teacher training in England. I used the ideas of Foucault (1973, 1988, 2000) to propose three assumptions (pp.25-31) to better understand "on what kinds of assumptions, what kind of familiar, unchallenged and unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest" (pp.154-5).

The study highlights the complexity of the teacher experience. I conclude that the new teacher experience of instructional coaching is influenced by factors relating to the new teacher's professional identity and agency development; relating to their relationships with their coach; relating to their understanding of the policy reforms underlying instructional coaching; and the placement school context in which their coaching took place.

The findings suggest that teacher experience can be influenced by a teacher's understanding of their gender; their subject specialism; and their past experiences in sport and music. Notably, researchers have highlighted the importance of gender (Francis, 2008; Yang, 2024; Eldred et al., 2022; Haase, 2008) and science specialism (Rutti et al., 2013; Helms, 1998; Chung-Parsons and Bailey, 2019) to developing teacher identity but not to the new teacher's experience of a specific practice, such as instructional coaching.

This study builds on prior research focusing on career changers as a group who have specialist needs in teacher training (White et al., 2024, Dadvand et al., 2024; Williams, 2010; Negrea, 2024; Grier and Johnston, 2009). However, this study highlights that career changers are a diverse group who potentially bring more developed skills in learning and collegial relationships to the instructional coaching experience.

The findings point to new teachers becoming more adept at building relationships as they move through their training and the need to more purposefully match teachers and coaches to facilitate those relationships, without the relationships feeling too “contrived” (Hargreaves and Dawes, 1990, p.239).

The policy technologies outlined in chapter 2 suggest the way that instructional coaching moved from political ideology to practice in schools. The study showed that teachers aligned or misaligned their professional identities to what they perceived to be the key tenets of the instructional coaching. But, regardless of the teachers’ developing professional identities or their understanding of the policy surrounding the coaching, this study concludes that their experiences were most influenced by the immediate context in which the coaching took place, embodied by the coach and key leaders in their placement school.

Recommendations for Practice and Future Research

Based on the conclusions I have presented, I make three recommendations to influence coaching practice in the future and make suggestions for further research topics.

Firstly, career changers need to be given particular attention by leaders and coaches. Their more developed agency and understanding of their own professional identities needs to be utilised to enhance their training. Career changers’ experience of coaching, and specifically their experiences of being part of a hierarchical coaching relationship, needs further research. The study also suggests that other groups are maybe more susceptible to engagement or disengagement with coaching. Research that focuses on how teacher understanding of their gender and subject specialisms impact and enhance engagement with coaching are needed.

Secondly, the data suggests a need for teachers and coaches to be more deliberately paired to provide conditions which allow for ‘vibing’ between individuals. Research into what constitutes a ‘vibe’ between teacher and coach in a hierarchical relationship, and what information leaders would need to pair them, is needed. The data raises two risks with pairing teacher and coach. The first is that the collegial relationships will be too “contrived” (Hargreaves and Dawes, 1990, p.239). The

second is that pairing teacher and coaches who 'vibe' may lead to the pair separating themselves from the rest of the staff body. If teacher and coach get on too well, they may become friends, and their relationship may lack the criticality required to challenge each other and exert agency. Better understanding of how teacher and coach use commonalities to built trust in the coaching relations would aid in the implementation of coaching and reduce the 'luck' needed to gain a positive teacher/coach pairing.

Finally, the data suggests a need for new teachers to understand where coaching sits as part of the big picture of teacher training and development. The teachers in the study parroted coaching language passed down to them from leaders, and they formulated views on where they sat in relation to policy, but engagement with policy should have its place on teacher training curriculums. If teachers enter the profession without seeing the big picture of their profession, and where a practice like instructional coaching has come from, they are being intentionally blinkered. How new teachers understand and talk about policy requires further research to better understand how policy flows from politician to teacher, and the ideology that informs it. Alongside a better understanding of educational policy development, this study suggests that teachers and coaches require a better understanding of how professional identity and agency develops in new teachers, and the role that coaching plays in this development.

Limitations of the Study

The study interviewed 15 teachers using convenience and purposive sampling and so the size of the sample presents a limitation. Convenience sampling meant that teachers were asked initially if they had received instructional coaching, without gaining clarity of what form of instructional coaching. This meant that three interviews were discarded after they were conducted because the version of instructional coaching was found, during the interview, to be different from the other new teachers in the study.

I chose not to collect data prior to, or during the interviews, relating to the teachers. All the information that I gained about the teachers was disclosed during the interview. This meant that I did not track their specific training routes, Lead Providers and the online platforms they used to record their coaching. Having this information may have allowed me to make further "tentative generalisations" (Pring, 2009, p.119) across the data set.

My data sample included teachers who had received coaching in their first three years of teaching – in their ITT year or in their ECT years. If I had limited my sample to either ITT or ECF teachers, I may have been able to make more specific conclusions about their experiences. The differences between

Olivia, who was interviewed in her first few weeks of teaching, and Sophia, who was interviewed in the year after her training had finished, needed to be acknowledged.

Aside from the Covid pandemic informing my decision to conduct interviews via Zoom, I am aware that the Covid pandemic is not something that I have addressed in the research. The teachers did not speak about it in their interviews. However, as some of the teachers will have started their training during the pandemic, it will have had an impact on their experience. If I had addressed it explicitly in the interview questions, I may have gained a greater insight into the influences on their experience.

A further limitation of this study relates to the distinctive positionality associated with undertaking a professional doctorate. Unlike full-time academic researchers, professional doctorate candidates move continually between workplace and academic contexts, which potentially creates a more fluid and unstable research position (Czerniawski, 2023). My own experience reflected what Scott et al. (2004, p.3) describe as the “twilight zone” between research and practice. Although positionality is “situation and context-dependent” (Holmes, 2020, p.2) for all researchers, the frequency of contextual shifts over the course of this research study amplified this fluidity.

For example, my professional role changed from teacher trainer to school leader, and later, to classroom teacher. These transitions inevitably influenced how I related to the phenomenon (instructional coaching) being researched, initially aligning my biases more closely with the leaders implementing instructional coaching and, towards the end of the study, with the teachers receiving it. This shifting standpoint will have shaped the way I interpreted data and though I engaged in “continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation” (Berger, 2013, p.220), some influences of my shifting positionality will remain embedded the research process.

Documenting my reflexive process, and identifying all the ways the research was impacted by my shifting positionality, would warrant “its own manuscript” (Sibbald et al., 2025, p.7) and, even then, accurately stating my positionality may not serve to limit the biases that it creates. This point represents an inherent limitation of practitioner-research conducted within a professional doctorate context.

To address this limitation in future research, Zembylas (2025) suggests a “continuous re-evaluation of positionality” which is “revisited and renegotiated over time” and:

“allows for a more conscientious engagement with the politics of knowledge production and ensures that scholars and researchers remain accountable

to the communities and issues they are addressing” (p.477).

The continuous shifts in my positionality as I move in the ‘twilight zone’ between research and practice, also creates challenges when considering how to disseminate the findings. As my professional identity – my teacher identity and my emerging researcher identity – shifts, so too does my relationship to the audience that I will disseminate my research to and the position that I speak from. The “ambiguity” (Czerniawski, 2023, p.1381) of my positionality has extended beyond data collection and analysis to the communication of the research and, to address this limitation in my research, I will need to move forward with “explicit self-consciousness and self-assessment” (Holmes, 2020, p.2).

Final Thoughts

The three layers of the teacher experience of instructional coaching presented in this thesis are summarised by Olivia:

*‘Trust the process’ that’s the favourite phrase of everyone [...]
I don’t want to trust the process; that’s not me.*

In this quote, Olivia shows her relationship with the process, with everyone else and with herself (“me”). She also presents the conflicts in her experience – between being agentive and compliant (“that’s not me” but she complies); between trusting and being the lowest in the hierarchy of “everyone”; and between the universal (“the process”) and the individual (“me”). I started this thesis by recounting an instructional coaching interaction between Helen and Laura that I observed in New York. It felt too easy, rehearsed and well-polished and I wished to better understand Helen’s experience. Olivia’s experience of instructional coaching, years later, 3000 miles apart, was uncomfortable, messy and dislocated. Her experience presents the complexities of the implementation of instructional coaching better than watching Helen and Laura’s well-polished routine. I hope that this thesis has highlighted the importance of exploring the messy experiences over observing, practicing and replicating, the well-polished ones.

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APPENDICES

1. Pilot Interview Questions

Pilot Interview Questions/Script

New Teachers Experiences of Instructional Coaching

Kate Forbes

Thank you for your time [name]. It is really appreciated.

Ethics notes

When the interview starts, I will record the meeting/interview and let you know when the recording has started. The Zoom software will be transcribing the interview. [Check their screen name has been changed to the pseudonym]. Once the transcription is downloaded, I will delete the meeting recording. The transcript will be saved on my university OneDrive account in a password protected file. I will keep the transcription for the duration of my doctoral studies (until mid-2025) and what we talk about today will inform, and quotes may be used in, my thesis.

Safeguarding

A reminder that your participation in this study is confidential but, if you make a disclosure during this interview that suggest you or someone else has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, then I will need to pass it on.

Have you read the Participant Information Sheet? Would you like a copy of the transcript and/or recording file? Would you like a copy of my final thesis? Do you have any further questions before we start? Are you happy to proceed?

[Press record].

The aim of my research is to understand new teachers experiences of instructional coaching – I wish to better understand how you experienced the process of instructional coaching, including your interactions with your mentor during the instructional coaching conversations. I also wish to hear how you think instructional coaching impacted on you as a learner and as a teacher. The literature of how coaching is delivered is plentiful but there is little research on how teachers receive and experience instructional coaching and this is why I think it is important to talk to you today.

Why did you choose to train to be teacher?

- Did you start training straight out of university, or did you change careers to be a teacher?
- What were your other career or training options?
- Why did you choose this specific training route?
- Do you think you will stay in teaching long term?
- Do you see yourself as a 'teacher' or a 'student' at this moment?

Going back to your own schooling, can you tell me about your experiences of being taught?

- Did you enjoy school when you were a student?

- What sort of learner/student do you think you were at school? Do you think you are a better or worse learner/student now?
- What helped you to learn at school? What do you feel hindered you?
- Has your view of school and learning changed since training to be a teacher? Have your needs as a learner changed at all?

During your schooling and beyond that, can you tell me about any past experiences of mentoring or coaching?

- Prior to teacher training, did you have any other mentors or coaches in any area of your life?
- What was their role?
- Choose one example – either a mentor or a coach who has supported you. Tell me about your relationship with them. Tell me about a memorable conversation you had with them.
- Do you think there is a difference between a mentor and a coach? If so, what is it?

Looking at the mentoring you receive as part of your teacher training, can you tell me about the role of your Stage A mentor? (I ask about your Stage A mentor because that is who we recorded in the coaching meetings.)

- How often did you see them? Were your meetings scheduled or do you meet more informally?
- Were your meetings structured? How?
- Is your mentor an ‘expert’? How do you know?
- Do you think your Stage A mentor enjoyed mentoring you? What makes you think that?
- Was there a hierarchy between you and your Stage A mentor? Why do you think that? Did that affect your relationship, either positively or negatively?
- Is your mentor ever called a ‘coach’? When? By whom? Does their behaviour change when they are coaching as opposed to mentoring?
- Was there a difference between your relationship with your Stage A mentor and your Stage B mentor? Was that because they were different or you were different do you think? What was the difference? What was the impact on you?
- What do you think is important in a relationship between a trainee teacher and their mentor?

Focusing in specifically on instructional coaching now. It has many definitions; can you tell me what you think it is?

- Had you heard the term ‘instructional coaching’ used before this study? From where/who?
- What it is? (What happens? Who takes part? How is it recorded? Who delivers it? How do they know what to do?)
- Why do you think that it is used as part of your teacher training?
- Have you heard the terms ‘novice’ as part of your training? Have you ever been called a ‘novice’? If so, how did you feel about it?

How did your Stage A mentor deliver instructional coaching to you?

- How often? Were all your meetings instructional coaching meetings? Were there similarities across meetings or were they always different? Do you or your mentor need to prepare in any way for the meetings? Do you have to do any follow up afterwards?
- Outside of instructional coaching, what other conversations did you have with your mentor?
- Thinking back to the meetings that were recorded, were they typical of your instructional coaching conversations?

- Can you remember your first experience of instructional coaching? How did it feel? Were you prepared in any way for this meeting – were you given any training or advice on how to behave or interact with your mentor during these meetings?
- Does any recording online or otherwise happen during the meeting? What are your feelings about this?
- Can you tell me about a time when an instructional coaching conversation has led to an improvement in you or your teaching? Why do you think this was?
- Can you tell me about a time when an instructional coaching conversation has led to no impact or even a detrimental impact on you or your teaching? Why do you think this was?
- If you were speaking to someone who was just about to start teacher training, what would you tell them about instructional coaching? What advice would you give them on how to build a good relationship with their mentor?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences of instructional coaching this year? Is there anything you have said that you would like to clarify or reflect on?

[Stop recording].

Thank you so much for your time. The interviews I am doing will be written up as part of my thesis and, if you are interested, I can share the learning points from my thesis with you in the autumn term.

Do you have any questions before the meeting ends?

2. Study Interview Questions

Study Interview Questions/Script

New Teachers' Experiences of Instructional Coaching

Kate Forbes

Thank you for your time [name]. It is really appreciated.

Ethics notes

When the interview starts, I will record the meeting/interview and let you know when the recording has started. The Zoom software will be transcribing the interview. [Check their screen name has been changed to the pseudonym]. Once the transcription is downloaded, I will delete the meeting recording. The transcript will be saved on my university OneDrive account in a password protected file. I will keep the transcription for the duration of my doctoral studies (until mid-2025) and what we talk about today will inform, and quotes may be used in, my thesis. Reminder about the consent form!

Safeguarding

A reminder that your participation in this study is confidential but, if you make a disclosure during this interview that suggest you or someone else has been harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, then I will need to pass it on.

Have you read the Participant Information Sheet? Would you like a copy of the transcript and/or recording file? Would you like a copy of my final thesis? Do you have any further questions before we start? Are you happy to proceed?

[Press record].

The aim of my research is to understand new teachers' experiences of instructional coaching – I wish to better understand how you experienced the process of instructional coaching, including your interactions with your mentor during the instructional coaching conversations. I also wish to hear how you think instructional coaching impacted on you as a learner and as a teacher. The literature on how coaching is delivered is growing but there is little research on how teachers receive and experience coaching as individuals and this is why I think it is important to talk to you today.

There are three loose parts to the interview:

- **Understanding what you think instructional coaching is and the details of when you experienced it and how it fitted in with your professional development.**
- **Finding out about your experiences of the separate steps of instructional coaching.**
- **Understanding how instructional coaching impacted on you.**

But first, how have you ended up at your school teaching what you are teaching?

We need a shared understanding of what instructional coaching is. I am going to show you a diagram with the steps of an instructional coaching process as defined by StepLab.

- *How does this diagram chime with your experience?*
- *Can you give me details: Who with? How long? When? Where?*

- *How did instructional coaching fit into, or in with, your other professional development.*
- *How was instructional coaching first explained to you?*



The coach observes the teacher, reviewing their process and identifying a potential next best step



The coach gives the teacher precise praise before sharing and agreeing the next step to work on



The coach models the step to help the teacher see what good looks like in practice



The teacher plans and rehearses the step, multiple times, with feedback between each round, before taking it successfully to their classroom

Looking at these four steps separately:

- *Tell me about being observed?*
- *What part did praise play in the process for you?*
- *How was your action step decided?*
- *Tell me about the modelling part.*
- *Tell me about the rehearsal.*
- *Tell me how your action step and the modelling and the rehearsing then fed into your real-life teaching.*
- *When did you move on from an action step?*
- *How, if at all, were the interactions with your mentor different when they were being a coach?*
- *How would you describe the dynamic between you and your mentor?*

Focusing in on you and your development:

- *Why do you think instructional coaching was used as a method for your development?*
- *How do you think the instructional coaching helped/helps you to develop?*
- *How do you think, if at all, it hindered you?*
- *Had you experienced 1:1 coaching prior to teacher training?*
- *Would you define yourself as a novice or an expert or neither?*
- *Has anyone else defined you or other teachers as a novice or an expert?*

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences of instructional coaching? Is there anything you have said that you would like to clarify or elaborate on?

[Stop recording].

Thank you so much for your time. The interviews I am doing will be written up as part of my thesis and, if you are interested, I can share the learning points from my thesis with you in the autumn term.

Do you have any questions before the meeting ends?

3. Coded Transcript

PRIOR EXPERIENCE/ IDENTITY
AGENCY
MENTOR/COACH

SCHOOL/ TRAINING PROVIDER/ GOV POLICY
CONTEXT
COACHING PROCESS

Okay, so there will be three loose parts to this conversation. The first one is me and you checking that when we say, 'instructional coaching', we mean the same or a similar thing. And I'm going to be thinking about where instructional coaching has fitted into your training as a teacher up until now.

Okay. At this point I'm not quite sure what the term specifically refers to.

Great. So we'll do that first. We'll go through parts of the instructional coaching conversation as you've had them or the instructional coaching process. We'll look at each of those. And then at the end we'll just double back and really focus in on you and anything that's specific to you or your background that's affected the way you've come to instructional coaching.

Okay.

So the first thing I'm going to do is I'm just going to share an image with you that gives an outline of instructional coaching and see if that chimes with your experience. Okay, can you see this?

Reviewing the process and identify your potential next best step – so you get observed as a teacher by a coach who would usually be your mentor if you were an ECT and they would identify a next step from watching you teach.

Then you would have a dedicated time that you would sit down together probably during dedicated mentor meeting time and they would start with some praise and then you would agree that you were going to work on the thing that you were going to work on which would be pretty narrow.

Oh, right. Yeah.

Then the coach would do some modelling of what that step might look like in practice. But in in that meeting environment, not with children there.

Hmm.

And then you would do some practice; you probably get some feedback; you might rehearse it again before you then take it back into the classroom and get observed doing it.

Right.

And then at some point, the coach or the mentor would say you're done with that. Let's move on to something else.

How does that chime with your experience of instructional coaching?

We know that we're supposed to do that. We haven't done it at any point and it never happened during my training year and it hasn't happened yet this year in my ECT1 year.

If that makes me an invalid participant, then do let me know. But we do know that's what's supposed to happen. The reality of things has never resulted in that actually happening.

Great. So I'm interested in the reality of things. So just some clarifying questions: Who was your first year training provider?

It was XXX, which is in XXX.

Okay, and how did you know you were supposed to be doing instructional coaching?

Oh, the part where I was observed every lesson obviously. I was in there with someone who observed me, but I don't think we were supposed to do the thing where we agree what I'm going to do and then the mentor demonstrates it in front of me. And then I demonstrate it back in front of them. I don't think we ever knew that we were supposed to do that. I don't think we were.

Okay. And then in your ECT year...

That's now.

What are you supposed to do?

We are supposed to be doing, yeah, my mentor has said to me that we're supposed to be doing this thing where I kind of, in an empty classroom, I pretend I'm teaching some children. And then you watch it and then you have a go at it, and I sort of said, "I'm glad we're not doing that" and she said, "Yeah. No. Not doing that." And that was that.

Who's your training provider for your ECT.

Training provider? I've got a thing called XXX.

Yeah, and who provides your course? Is it XXX?

Yeah, XXX. Yeah.

Right. You're doing it through XXX and you've got Step Lab. And you've got a mentor. Right. From the start, who first spoke to you about instructional coaching or whatever this process was?

Well, I don't think it's ever been defined as like there's this process called 'instructional coaching'. It was more the kind of we know that she's supposed to come and observe me at least once a week. So far in the...in the two terms that we've had she has spent a total of 10 min in my classroom. And this is not me slugging her off because she's a great mentor. But she has only spent about 10 mins in the classroom. Because I mean, I've, I've been off a fair bit. And she has Thursday's off. She's on 0.8. We're both new to the school so we're both incredibly busy and sort of finding our way with things and the organisation and administration and timetabling of things has not been ideal. But, yeah, we've had, we've scheduled a mentor meeting for once every fortnight and then we're supposed to also do it on a Tuesday after school. But we sort of never do that one on the week B. And in our mentor meeting every Tuesday morning, she basically has a great deal of faith in me and says, "you're doing fine". And yeah, we quite often...she says, "I'll put some new targets on XXX for you". And I do my little XXX thing every week.

What's your little XXX thing?

That's once a week you're supposed to do one training module on it. Where it gives you a video of this man with horrible greasy hair who says some, something or other. You're supposed to watch a video, which I don't watch, then it makes you read something, which I don't read, and then it makes you do a quiz. The answers to are completely intuitive. Well, no, sometimes they're trick questions. But generally I know exactly what it's trying to say because it's just blatantly obvious. And then, and then a bit at the bottom where you have to type it, "oh, this from this module I have learned that...", and you have to do that once per week, otherwise you get in trouble. But it's a bit 'tick box exercise'.

What are these things focused on - these videos?

It's been...the strand I'm on now is behaviour. It says behaviour, but every week is a different part of classroom management. And from going through it, **I do pick up little bits and bobs**. Like kind of, you know, things like positive reinforcement when students are just meeting expectations sets low expectations so, you know, give them positive reinforcement when they exceed expectations but not otherwise - things like that little tidbits that help out in the classroom. Yeah, that's my little XXX thing. **I usually get it out the way on a Monday**, otherwise I forget.

When you meet with your mentor and she said, "there's this thing we're supposed to be doing." Can you just give me a little bit more detail in what she said you were supposed to be doing and any reason she gave for not doing that?

Okay, so well, but **we both know that she's supposed to come into my classrooms and observe me**. It's just been that there's always - it's not that we've sort of both agreed that she doesn't need to do that - **she has kept saying, that I'm going to come in at some point this week**. She said yesterday that she was going to come in at some point today and you know, my doors always open any time. But she didn't. **I guess she didn't get time today or...so it just keeps, sort of, not happening rather than us both conspiring to deliberately not do it. It just doesn't get, doesn't get, done.** **Through circumstance and sort of persistent failures rather than us saying it's not worth doing out loud.**

Right.

We both know that her coming and observing...I mean she did it once. The time when she did come she kind of saw that I was having a bit of trouble with the starting routine and getting them into the class and she sat me down and said, "you know, in cases like that, don't get too hung up on getting them to behave in the corridor just get them in, get them sat down, give them something on the board to start doing and then go around making sure they're doing it rather than insisting on perfect behaviour from the corridor inwards". **And I applied that and that's worked like a charm, you know, that's been a very positive step that I took from her and have a play and we put that into the XXX and kind of made it our thing.** But then the second one that we've got on there, which was about 'providing stretch challenges', **we kind of just made that up because, it didn't, it couldn't come from observation** because she hadn't been in, so we talk over what's been going on in my lesson sometimes.

I pop in at break time or every now and then, and we have a chat about what's going on. And from that, things you kind of said, you know, "have you been doing set challenges for the more able?" (My school doesn't have a more able classification.) So I said, "I try to do that when I remember but I do sometimes forget," and she said, "well, just, you know, make sure you're doing that every week and then we can put that in as a goal and we can then we can take it off as a goal if you say you've done it."

There was never any point when we said, "Let's not bother" or anything like that. The only thing that we have outright said...she said to me, **"we're supposed to do this thing where I observe you and then I model for you what I want you to do in the classroom and then you have a go at modelling it". We did...officially, explicitly say that and then both kind of said like: "I'm not doing that".** So that was something we explicitly, sort of agreed to refuse to do. But the observations and that not happening is something that kind of just naturally...it's not happened. **Because I think we both think that we should be doing that.**

When you agreed not to do the stand up pretending you're in a classroom thing. What was the reason for that from your point of view?

It was unspoken between us, we both just kind of did that sort of mutual agreeing like, kind of thing, so it was never explicitly stated. **It was just clear that we both agreed that it seemed an unnecessary step.** I mean, I think part of it is that **I have got teaching experience from before I started my training.** And she has seen me teach. And kind of has some idea that **I'm maybe more familiar, more experienced, than the average ECT** and therefore, **don't necessarily need those kind of hand holding steps.** But I think, **we both, we do share a perception that it's something that has been put in place.** What's the right way to say it? A kind of **really unnecessary patronising-hand-holdy-spoon-feedy step** so that the people who are high up in the system looking down can say, you know, "this has been done therefore you've got no excuse for not

being able to do it" but in reality people with a bit of common sense looking at it, can see that's just weird. And I think it was that we both perceived that disconnection between our perception as ground troops kind of in the situation being asked to implement it and the policy level decision where it probably seemed like a great idea. Yeah, the disconnection between those two perspectives. I think we shared the view that, whereas the higher ups probably think is a great idea for us, it would just be weird, awkward and unnecessary.

So you've talked about "clicking through otherwise you get told off". I'm taking from that that there is time spent on there that isn't a good use of your time as a teacher. Is that fair?

I do not resent spending 15 to 20 min on professional development once a week. And I do pick up good things from there. I do take away things from it into my...and apply them in...my practice as well and I don't resent that at all. I think it's a good use of my time. If I did everything that it tells me to do, I'll be spending about 2 or 3 hrs a week on there and a lot of that would just be watching these ridiculous unnecessary overproduced videos of someone with...can I use the phrase 'sh*t eating grin' on here?

Yeah.

It's just an offensive looking man, very patronising, irritating, and goes through this stuff really, really slowly and sort of repetitively says things that are really obvious. And make something that could be 15 min take 2 or 3 hrs. And so I do skip through the videos. I do have a quick read of the part that you're supposed to read. I do do the quiz and the quiz does highlight things that I sort of do know and don't know and then I do pick up the things I don't know. Yeah, it's really, this, the whole thing loses its credibility with me when it treats me like an idiot. I suppose would be my summary of it. I don't have 2 or 3 hrs to spend on that. I've got 15 or 20 mins. Making it take that long and having these ridiculous overproduced videos is not necessary. And it just makes me think that the people who are deciding, what should, what the ECTS should be doing have got absolutely no understanding of what the reality of the lived experiences for the ECTS. And so they sort of undermine their own credibility with it.

And if we think about you as an ECT. You've taught before. And prior to this we spoke about the fact that you've got a PhD. How do those things and any other things affect the way that you have come to this process?

Well, my prior teaching experience was in XXX. So it was in some ways relevant, in other ways, it was really just me learning habits that I had to unlearn when I got to England and tried it. So it wasn't, I mean, on paper, yes, I've been teaching for like 10 years before I started training, but lots of it was teaching English to primary school children in XXX, lots of it was teaching adults online. It was all ESL. And so none of it really did apply to my actual classroom routine.

I did have things like experience of planning lessons. But then that was in a completely different country, totally different context, completely different priorities and, and all of that. So really, I don't think my experience stood me in any great stead as an ECT if anything it was just habits to unlearn, as I say, in terms of the theory of it. I was alright because, you know, my master's degree, doctorate degree, were all in Education. Or education related at least. But, then the PGCE that we had to do whilst training. I actually screwed up one of the modules and ended up only passing it at an undergraduate level which, which was really annoying and that was, that's a different issue.

So in your first year you got PGCE and QTS. Is this correct?

Yes, that's right. Yeah. Yeah, except the PGCE I got is the professional P, rather than the postgraduate. Because I passed one of my modules at undergraduate rather than post graduate level. It's still PGCE, but it's a professional certificate rather than a postgraduate certificate. It's the...certificate looks the same and if you put up...I put PGCE on the CV and no one's ever going to...yeah, my experience didn't really inform my practice at all. I mean, I had some basic classroom routines like the habit of just walking up and down a classroom. And the confidence, you know, the kind of, the teacher stare. And the kind, yeah, I have seen some trainees in a classroom and they're kind of like now mousing around and I was able to just like kind of stride in on day one and be like, "right this is this, this is that."

That's not to say that I was doing well. I was just doing... well confidently, doing badly confidently. So, no, it did inform my practice in that way, I guess, I did have some kind of micro routines that were in place. PGCE helped me with training. And I guess it's still helping me now in terms of like when I look at these XXX modules a lot of it is just intuitive and seems like common sense. Possibly because of all of the studying I've done about education in the past. So maybe my progress is accelerated or facilitated because of my academic background and experience. Does that answer the question?

Yeah, it does. So when you said that your mentor knows that you've had prior teaching experience (and this was when you said that she says you're doing a good job and she knows that you taught before), she clearly thinks that that 10 years prior teaching experience has had quite a big impact on how you now come into the classroom.

I mean she has seen me teach and she, we have had teaching conversations. And stuff. But yeah, I mean her perception of my competence, I guess, is arguably an assumption rather than based on empirical evidence.

How important do you think that confidence is that you've that you've come to this process with?

You mean my confidence in my own..?

Yeah, your confidence: "No, mousing around".

I mean, I kind of, I, in my master's degree, I studied XXX so I'm quite, kind of, explicitly aware of that area of things. And yeah, I mean confidence, in terms of... I wouldn't say I necessarily believe that I'm a good teacher. I believe I've got a lot of potential. And I believe I am getting better working towards it. However, I mean if I'm completely honest I think that on paper I'm sort of a bit overrated in terms of the, you know, "He's got the PhD. He's got all this experience." But actually put me in a classroom, I quite often suck. I do, I am, I mean, I've done some absolute stinkers of lessons in recent months, like really proper crap ones. And I learned from the experience and I reflect and I kind of work out how to get better but also, I suppose there's no point hiding the fact that I kind of... I am working towards, I mean, my goal at the minute is to be competent without spending an unrealistic amount of time on planning.

*So there are times when I consciously under planned because I'm like, "no I've spent 20 mins planning a lesson." I can't spend more than 20 mins planning every hour that I teach, like if that's what I've come up with in 20 min, that's what needs to be done, and I go in with that. And, and yeah, sometimes it's sh*t. Quite frankly. I think if I sometimes do sit down and spend an hour, hour and a half planning a lesson just because I want to, and because I have the time, and because I feel passionate about that and that tends to go really well. And I think if I was doing that all the time then yeah I'd be flying but, in the real world... my current goal, personally, not my official goal with my mentor or anything, but my personal goal, is to get to a point where I can spend 15 or 20 min planning something and then deliver a decent lesson consistently. And there are times when that works and there are times when it doesn't work.*

And when you say some of the lessons have been "stinkers". How are you assessing that?

Okay. The things, where there, there are things that quite often go, you know, obviously wrong. Behaviour, for example, I'm in quite a behavioural school. And if I'm on form and I'm saying to myself, "right, we need, I need to remember that I need to be on top of them from the minute they get in there and giving out the negative points, being stern, being uncompromising" then I can get a full lesson plan done without it getting derailed by behaviour.

However, what often happens is I'll have my mind half on something else. They'll come in and I'll start chatting away to them and being, you know, Mr. Friendly and then "boom" suddenly it is out of control and I'm like, "guys, guys guys guys... 1 2 3", clapping like an idiot and then, you know, once that slipped out of your hands and you don't really get it back for the hour. And quite often what happens then is that I don't get to the end of the lesson that I had planned. I'll get maybe two thirds of the way through and be like,

"look, we're out of time, now you're gonna have to bugger off?" So you know that's an example of how a lesson can be a crap lesson.

I had one the other day. I've had quite a few lessons where I've been ill a couple of times, when I've come back, and they've had cover, and then I've tried to kind of pick up from where we left off, and I've sort of not really known what's going on. That has, those have been quite sort of shambolic at times and I could have done things like got their books and looked at exactly what they had done. But again, it was kind of me not investing that extra time, not going that extra mile doing that thing that is necessary really, but me kind of saying like, "no". There are limits on how much time I'm going to spend.

And other ones with year 10...I've been doing An Inspector Calls and I don't really know what happens in An Inspector Calls. It's the first time I've done it. I've been a page or two ahead of them all the way through it. One of them today said, "oh, what's, like, Sybil talking about." I was like, "who's Sybil? Okay. Is that Mrs. Birling? Oh, oh, you're on first name terms there, are you?" I, I didn't know. There's been a few shambolic moments within An Inspector Calls and the GCSE Poetry Anthology as well because that takes a few years to get acquainted with and, you know. Are you English your background in teaching?

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah. There are, you know, like, what you meant to say about 'Tissue'? I don't know what you want to say about 'Tissue'. I've tried, but some, but yeah, 'Tissue' could make any teacher do a crap lesson, I'm sure, because I'm sure you know, that sometimes with poetry, you can just be...but the poetry scheme of work we've got for year 9 now is World War One poetry and you're supposed to do one poem every lesson. We were supposed to do one poem every lesson with a GCSE anthology as well. I don't know how you're supposed to do a poem in a lesson or, what even, what that means but I know that what all the other teachers in the department do is say, "right, on the visualizer, everyone copy my annotations I'm going to tell you what this means is...what that means is...what that means and if you've got that written down then we've succeeded. Goodbye." And I don't subscribe to that school of thought at all. I think that's a hideous waste of time. And so I've been kind of developing my own lessons to get my class, you know, inferring, reading into it, composing around it, you know, hiding bits of the poem, "what do you think is going to go in there?" Like having discussions about it. And I'm proud of what I've done with those kids and that's the kind of experience that makes me think, yes, I am competent. I do have, if not the manifest ability to do it brilliantly now, certainly the latent intuition and attitude that will make me good at it in time with the experience. I think I've got the raw ingredients of a good teacher just, not quite cooked yet, possibly.

I'm interested about your interactions with your mentor, so your mentor meetings. I know you said there's been some absence, but they generally happen every other week, do they? You don't do the after school one.

Yeah, they're supposed to be first period on a XXX and, when we've both been in, we have done that. We've stuck to it. Yeah and, you know, I go into her office, and we do spend the hour talking about teaching.

How is the meeting structured?

It's not really structured, I would say. It starts with kind of her saying like, you know, "so what's been going on? Tell me about your week. What experiences have you been having?" and we will, kind of, have a more, kind of, informal discussion. I will lay out some of the teaching problems I've had, and she might suggest some solutions. Quite often though we've been talking about, you know, the practical aspects of, of the school that we're in and, you know, less general theoretical teaching problems, more things like, kind of, how to work the systems and, you know, this kind of school level stuff.

Give me an example.

Now that you say it, I'm gonna have to think of one. Yeah, stuff like how to communicate with teachers who you share a class with. Things like that, ways of organising a shared class. Travelling between classrooms when you have to, you know, that kind of stuff that, do you know, I don't really,

necessarily...you know, it does help to get advice from an expert, but it's not really what we're supposed to be talking about sometimes but sometimes I think but it is quite often what's forefront in my mind.

And it's helpful?

Oh yeah, definitely, definitely helpful, yeah. Yeah, she's really experienced. She is a really, really good teacher. And we share a sort of...can I say, 'laid back'? 'Laid back' sounds bad. I think we both share a kind of "let's not get too stressed out about this" attitude towards teaching. Wherein we both acknowledged that a stressed-out teacher isn't going to be a very good one. So we are, kind of, one of a kind in that we do have very positive discussions, but they tend to be quite ad hoc and free flowing and unstructured.

And you've got that in common - you're laid back. Is there anything else? Is there anything else you've got in common or anything else you think works well with the two of you?

Yeah, we're the same age. We like the same things. I think we would genuinely be friends if we weren't in the...if it wasn't a working relationship. We get on very, very well. We are also both kind of outcasts in our department. We both joined at the same time. She was actually there at my job interview. We kind of saw each other and she was like, "well, I'm a head of department with 15 years experience" and I was like "I'm an ECT. Why are they interviewing both of us for the same job? What's going on?" So we thought, "oh, I guess, you know, well, whatever, who knows? But guess I'll never see you again. Hope I get it and you don't and then, when we both showed up: "Oh, they've hired both of us." Because I already knew her.

So, she's an English teacher; she's not Head of Department?

She was a Head of Department in a previous school. Here she's been, she was hired as Head of XXX or XXX or something like that, basically, in making the department better. And there've been all sorts of problems with that. She's really disenfranchised with the whole school. She doesn't want to stay there. She's, she's not been welcomed into the department and has not been successfully integrated or allowed to do the job she was hired to do. I got offered a job somewhere else, so I'm leaving at XXX. So I'm, kind of, not particularly popular either. But yeah, I mean, from the off, neither of us really got on particularly well with the rest of the department because they've all been there, like, 10-15 years.

So the two of us have tended to, kind of, not go to the staff room and go to her, kind of, downstairs office and sit in there and eat biscuits, and chat with each other. Rather than, I'm not gonna say that we sit and slag off the rest of the department, but we do sometimes, you know, voice our frustrations, and give each other a kind of (not shoulder to cry on) but we listen to each other and empathise. Because we're both new and both not very popular with the rest of the department.

Do you think, when you say you feel like you've got the raw materials, do you think you need more structure than you are getting in your one-to-one support?

In order for me to develop into a better teacher? No, I...this might come across as a bit arrogant, but I think I've got enough knowledge and enough self-awareness to reflect and improve, as a kind of independent process, at my own pace. I mean, I would appreciate having the observation and the feedback.

I don't wanna say that I am unhappy that I'm not getting it at the minute because I've just got more than enough on my plate and having that added bit of stress in my week, you know, even though it would be my mentor who I get on with, and I know she's totally on my side, still, you know, being observed is a bit stressful. There have been a few lessons where I'm like, "thank God she didn't come in during that one". You know, that would have been horrible. And so knowing that I am generally being left to develop on my own suits me. It's comfortable obviously but, without, well, on the other hand, I also do think that I am developing under my own steam. Maybe not as fast as I would, or as effectively as I would, if I had that kind of, you know, red hot poker up the bum of someone in there observing me and then giving me feedback on it and the accountability that would come with that. But for now, it suits me, I have to say.

And I think that she's quite possibly aware of that and aware that, you know, maybe me developing relatively slowly but comfortably is possibly what I need right now because you know my training year

nearly killed me. And I've made no secret of the fact that I came out of training like really close to being already burnt out and thinking of quitting. And to be honest these two terms I have just been allowed to let the dust settle and been allowed to find my own feet without someone grabbing me by the ear and dragging me through it. It has... I feel like there is an argument for saying that was exactly what I needed and it was probably quite wise of her to let me do that.

What was the issue with your training year if you could summarise?

Yeah, I don't wanna go on a great big long spiel because I'm aware that you, we, don't wanna get too agential. I had the kids, we've got XXX. My wife is XXX. So we had loads of personal stuff going on. The school I was in didn't give me any kind of scheme of work or pre-planned lessons. It was all very much, "right, we're teaching Othello. So you're going to have to learn Othello and basically design lessons from scratch." I was running from one classroom to the next to the next to the next, never enough time to get the laptop plugged in and set up in the next room. I had loads of...my mentor left halfway through the year and I got a new mentor. Everyone was way too busy to really kind of help me much anyway during that. But I did feel like I was being judged when I didn't get things right.

It was a really difficult school to work in. Behaviour was bad; it was a huge campus, running around everywhere, 2,000 kids. And yeah, the expectation was that I would create every lesson from scratch; do that ridiculous long lesson plan form; submit that 24 hrs in advance; then the teacher would say like, "no, that's not very good, do it again". So I would start it again from scratch.

So I started just not handing them in 24 hrs in advance and just showing up with it being like, "look, this is what it is. I'm not giving you 24 hrs to reject it and make me do it again". And so, yeah, by the end of that, when they ramped up my, my teaching timetable to like 3 or 4 lessons a day. And I was spending like 2 or 3 hrs planning each one of those...yeah that was, that was, killing me. That was, that was, too much. I was up to like 1, 2am every morning just lesson planning.

Did you gain support for being a parent?

Financially from the government, yes, I got, 2 days a week childcare for being a student, which was nice. There was one point when I had to just take a week out for my mental health and the school were, the department were, very supportive about that. The SCITT were and my training school were. I mean it was kind of on me to find out that I could do that. I did have to get pushed to the point where I was like, "if I go in tomorrow, I'm gonna having a f**king break down". But then I did go and find out about, you know, self-certifying, rang up this kind of charity for teachers' mental health and they told me that I could take a week off, so I rang up the school and I was like, "look I'm allowed to take a week off". And they were like, "yeah, do so". So I mean the two days of childcare a week did help. Yeah, yeah. You know, those were the supports that we had, I guess.

And, flipping from there to the future, you've got a new school in XXX. Have you met your mentor?

No.

And do you know if you're going to be staying with XXX?

I am. Yeah, I've got the transfer documents and emailed them to my new mentor.

Okay, and new mentor, but you haven't met yet?

No, that's right, yeah.

Bearing in mind what you've said about your mentor interactions and how you feel they've worked for you and the point that you were at, and you've had some understanding about that. How will that then affect how you go into your new mentoring relationship?

Right, well I'm a bit worried that I might go there and the new guy is really on it and he's like, "right, well, we have to do all of this and you have to..." You know, he's gonna want to do this instructional coaching stuff by the book. As long as it doesn't go over the hour of allotted time, I'm not against that. And I wouldn't be against the observations either. If things start taking up more time than they currently are, then I might start to grow resentful. But I am anticipating that I'll go there, and this person will be like, "right, well, we're doing it by the book. That means we need to sit down and go through these things together." And, you know, I imagine he or she will take the lead in doing that in our mentor meetings and I'm up for that. I'm not against that.

Just doubling back to something and then I'll give you your evening back: You talked about the powers that be and the not understanding what was going on on the coal face. You've done a masters and a PhD and I would imagine part of that is looking at educational policy and having an understanding of the context in which ECTs sit as a relatively new induction process. And also that the training program is relatively new and your Early Career Framework is a government created document. I just wondered if you have any other reflections on this training approach?

Yeah, possibly I could qualify what I said earlier, or modify it a little bit, because it is generally designed, I think, with people who are fresh out of uni in mind. I mean I know the current trainees we've got at my current school will benefit from all that stuff because she'll have the time to engage with it and it will be confidence boosting and edifying and probably fill in gaps exactly where there are gaps in her case.

I know that on my training course more than half of us were in our late thirties with kids. And so I do wonder whether a one size fits all thing like that...that does feel like it's designed for people who are more ignorant than a lot of us were. You know, a lot of them had TA experience. A lot of them had done education degrees. And a lot of us did a lot of the things that we were provided with and made to do, did feel, like inane box ticking. And even the most fastidious among us, by the end of it, was getting to the point where they were like, "we've just got to get these stupid things done. This is such a waste of time." It, it was a universal perception that all of the admin stuff we had to do was repetitive, patronising, irritating and unhelpful. And I would, yeah, I would extend that to a lot of the training program and it may be that being older and having some experience makes me more cynical of it and it is actually really helpful for the less experienced and the younger trainee.

However, given that there are, there is, a significant proportion of trainees in a similar position to me, would it perhaps make sense to have a differentiated program that took that into account? And avoided the kind of the time wasty stuff because, as I say, it doesn't it does undermine the credibility of the organisation that is ultimately responsible for training me. And it does make me think, "okay, so, yes, I want to be a teacher, but I've got to do so whilst living under the umbrella of these idiots." And therefore, to sort of doing what I can to dodge their nonsense. And, And that's not a good relationship between a power and a ground troop. And I'm aware of that and I'm, you know, I try not to be too cynical, and I do try to give them the benefit of the doubt where I can and say like, "look, this might be the right policy decision, it's just not working for me, you know, they might be doing it in the way that is best for the country's education system overall." It just doesn't gel well with me and my specific individual needs. I just know that most of the trainees who I did my training with will be thinking exactly the same thing as me and so I wonder nationwide what that percentage is like.

I need just one more thing. I'm really sorry.

Yeah, I'm having a nice time. I'm happy to keep going.

So, good, I'm pleased. You have said that you spend about 20 mins on a lesson, do it and then reflect. I think a few things go into that, that I have picked up, and confidence is one of them and, I think, potentially age maybe, and you've talked about time being quite important so that it, so that this, is sustainable. Where does that come from?

I'm still undecided as to whether I want to be doing it a long time. I do want my ECT. I want my qualified teacher certificate. I've worked out that I'm getting paid about £23 per lesson, currently, and you know that goes up as the years go by but if it gets to a point where I'm thinking, "I need more money than I'm getting

paid and I could be getting more money than that online at home”, then it may be that I changed my, that I changed my job, and just use the certificate for part of my CV.

However, I do get a buzz. I do get a sense that I am making a positive difference in the world and that is important to me as a person rather than just, you know, catering to the children of the rich who can afford one-to-one online stuff I would rather be in a classroom. Because I do get a great buzz out of it, and I would like to make it...basically, I need it to meet certain criteria in order for me to be able to do it long term. That means I wanna be out the door by 4. Because, I want, my family is my priority. I want to be at home. I'm an aspiring novelist. I want time to do that and I mean that's basically my hobby. You know, I want time for my personal life and I want time for my family and those are kind of prerequisites for me and something that, if I can't have those, then the job is not sustainable.

So sustainability, as you say, and so it seemed to me like, from the off, the making sure this is a job that I'm willing to keep doing is prerequisite to me keeping doing it, and that's it's on me to make it that way. I could I mean I do still see teachers who are you know more experienced, higher up, than me who are working until 7, 8 o'clock every night. And in my case, you know, I've got the way out. I've got the alternative career sitting there ready. If it starts demanding that of me, I will just go. And I know that I'll just go and ideally, I don't want that, so I do have to make it sustainable. And yeah, that means not working all the holidays. And it means not working in the evenings. I don't mind showing up to work at an hour early but I want to be out the door by 4 and that's kind of the, that's the, line that I've drawn. And as long as I can stay within those lines, I will be willing to keep doing it.

It's just that's realistic. It's it is a job that can pick you up and run away with you if you let it I think. Yeah, so just drawing the line from day one seem to me like the most appropriate way to go about building a career in teaching.

Yes, interesting. Is that anything else that you would like to tell me about your mentoring relationship or how you have not gone about instructional coaching that I, that we, haven't spoken about?

Apart from the fact that I'm...there is a part of me that wonders, you know, let's say I go to this new place, and they are like, “no, we're doing it by the book, we're doing the instructional coaching as it says we should in the manual and it's happening”. I don't know whether I'm going to be really glad we're doing that and I'm going to love it and I'm going to be like, “finally I'm developing more, I'm learning more, like, this is actually making me better even though it's a little uncomfortable and I get great joy from that.” Or whether I'm gonna be thinking, “oh man, this is such bullsh*t. I wish I was back at the other place with my old mentor. And we didn't have to do all this nonsense”.

I really don't know which it's going to be because it's my instinctive, natural, reactive perception is to say, “look at the nonsense that they're making people do these days”. Which is what my mentor and I did. At the same time, I'm sure it is research based. I'm sure it has come from people with better for qualifications, better knowledge than me, thinking very hard and carefully testing things. Looking all the available research and working out the most beneficial and practicable approach to it and I've been like, “yeah, like someone has pulled it out their a*se and said like, yeah, make them do this”. And so in my mind it's, kind of, it occupies those two positions simultaneously at the minute and I'm not sure which one it's going to turn out to be. If I'm, if I do, get forced to do it, I might love it or I might absolutely resent it. And it really could go either way.

And what's going to be your part in that? When you turn up, are you going to be done unto?

I mean, yeah, I will. When in Rome, I mean. If they're a place where, and my mentor says like, “We do things by the book. I do things by the book and I want us to do this.” Then, you know, I'm gonna say, “yeah, right. Sign me up. I'm here.” You know, I'll give it my all. I'm certainly not going to be like, “oh, do we have to?” Not gonna be like a year 10 child. I will go at it hammer and tongs and get the best I can out of it and part of me is sort of secretly looking forward to that.

I also know that I'll...they'll be times when I hate it. I'm like, “I want to get home. This is stupid. Is not the best use of my energy. I've got limited energy. This is like, let me go and do my lesson plans.” So yeah, I

think I will it will be probably a bit of a love-hate thing but I'm certainly not convinced that it's a waste of time. It might turn out to be really beneficial. The fact that I've been let off doing it for now, you know, I'll take that. But yeah, I'm not, I'm not against it. I just suspect that it might be the same as the other training stuff that we've been made to do, which is a ridiculously convoluted way of doing something that's actually, could be done with a simple conversation.

But yeah, I don't know which of those is the truth and I'm gonna have to wait and see and it could be that, you know, doing it with one mentor's great, doing it slightly different way with a different mentor that doesn't gel with me, turns it into the other thing. So, I will have to wait and see. With that. But, I'm open, open-hearted, open-minded.

Thank you. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experiences of instructional coaching?

No, I think I've covered it pretty well.

4. BREO Approval Letter



College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom
www.brunel.ac.uk

6 May 2021

CONDITIONAL LETTER OF APPROVAL

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 06/2021 AND 31/12/2024

Applicant (s): Mrs Kate Forbes

Project Title: Secondary senior leaders' perceptions of the 'persistent problems' they have faced when leading on teaching and learning.

Reference: 30417-LR-Apr2021- 32481-1

Dear Mrs Kate Forbes

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

Participant Information Sheet:

First paragraph: You change the date by which you want the participants to return their Consent Form as it has passed.

Do I have to take part? You change the date by which participant can withdraw as it has passed.

What if something goes wrong: You insert this section and state that the person to be contacted if the participant wishes to complain about the experience should be the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee Chair – Professor David Gallear (Chass-ethics@brunel.ac.uk).

Contacts: You insert the name and email address of your supervisor.

Risk Assessment: You have stated that you will ask participants to use headphones and that this request will be made in the participant information, however, you have not done so. Please correct on your Consent Form.

- **Approval is given for remote (online/telephone) research activity only. Face-to-face activity and/or travel will require approval by way of an amendment.**
- **The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.**
- In addition to the above, please ensure that you monitor and adhere to all up-to-date local and national Government health advice for the duration of your project.

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

Professor David Gallear

Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Brunel University London

5. Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with me (Kate Forbes) if you wish. My email address is kate.forbes@brunel.ac.uk.

Ethical approval for this research has been granted by the Brunel University College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Study Title

New teachers' experiences of instructional coaching

Researcher

Kate Forbes

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to better understand new teachers' experiences of instructional coaching. 'New' is defined here as being on an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) course or being an Early Career Teacher (ECT). 'Instructional coaching' is defined here as the structured conversations that you have with your mentor, or a more experienced teacher, about your teaching, in which you receive feedback, instruction and time to practice. This coaching will be a recommended element of your training.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have received, or are currently receiving, instructional coaching as part of your ITT or as an ECT.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary, so it is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form, but you are still free to withdraw at any time up until the date of your interview, and without having to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw your data, before it becomes pseudonymised, without having to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be interviewed by me. This interview will take place at a time convenient to you and it will take no longer than 60 minutes. The interview will take place on Zoom to allow you to access the interview from home or a secure, private place at school.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no anticipated disadvantages or risks associated with taking part in this research. However, if during the research evidence of harm or misconduct come to light, then it may be necessary to break confidentiality. It will be necessary to break confidentiality if a safeguarding disclosure is made. (I will tell you at the time if I think I need to do this, and let you know what will happen next.)

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Taking part will give you the opportunity to consider and share your experiences of instructional coaching. How coaching is delivered is a widely researched area but how it is received and experienced by teachers, as part of their teacher training in England, is currently an under researched area. This study will give new insight into instructional coaching as a form of professional development and your experience, as a new teacher in an English school, will be key to this.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Confidentiality will be assured with the exception as noted above (if evidence of harm or misconduct come to light or a safeguarding disclosure is made).

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?

The semi-structured interview will be recorded through Zoom and the file will be kept as a password-protected file on my Brunel One Drive. Once the Zoom software has transcribed the interview, the meeting recording will be deleted. I will ask you to change your name on Zoom, prior to joining the scheduled meeting, so that the transcript uses a pseudonym, and you cannot be identified from it. If you access the Zoom meeting from your school, I will also request that you wear earphones so that the interview cannot be overheard.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results from the interviews will be written up in my doctoral thesis and read by my supervisors throughout the drafting period and when it is submitted in 2025. The interview transcripts will be kept by me until 2025 or until the completion of my thesis and viva.

The key learning points from the research will be shared with you. If there is wider interest, they may also be written up with a view to publishing them more widely, for example as a journal article. If it reaches this stage, I will let you know. You will not be identified in any report or publication unless you specifically request to be.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This part of the study is not funded. It is being organised by me as part of my doctoral research at Brunel University London.

What are the indemnity arrangements?

Brunel University London provides appropriate insurance cover for research which has received ethical approval.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed, and been given ethical approval, by the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Research Integrity

Brunel University London is committed to compliance with the Universities UK [Research Integrity Concordat](#). You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from the researchers during the course of this research.

Contact for complaints:

Chair of the College of Business Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee: Professor David Gallear, cbass-ethics@brunel.ac.uk.

Contact for further information:

Kate Forbes (kate.forbes@brunel.ac.uk)

Supervisor name and details:

Dr Kate Hoskins (kate.hoskins@brunel.ac.uk)

6. Risk Assessment



BREO Risk Assessment form

This risk assessment should be completed for all research projects and should focus on any health and safety issues relating to Travel, Researchers or Participants.

Project Title	New Teachers' Experiences of Instructional Coaching
College/Directorate/Department	College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences – Education
Does your project involve travel (international or UK)?	No
Have you included measures relating to Covid-19 safety?	No (none needed)
Date of initial assessment	17 th April 2023

Brief description of work activity being assessed
Here you should briefly outline the type activity that will be occurring (travel, lab work, interviews of campus etc.).

Semi-structured interviews of teachers via Zoom

Things to consider within the assessment – this list may not be exhaustive

- **Personal safety**
- **Risk of distress, anxiety and psychological harm.**
- **Location/ Geographic risks** – Any risks specific to the proposed research location.

Risk Assessment:

Description of Hazard <small>(only include significant hazards inherent within the task or the activity.)</small>	Person(s) at risk <small>e.g. staff, students, unexpected persons, etc.</small>	Current control measures in place	Current risk rating			Further control measures required and by whom and when <small>(usually only necessary where the risk rating is either high or medium)</small>	Final risk rating		
			Likelihood	Severity or impact	Risk Rating		Likelihood	Severity or impact	Risk Rating
The Zoom meeting may be hacked into by someone outside of the organisation, who is not the participant or researcher. Information given during the interview may be overheard and no longer be secure or confidential. This could potentially socially or professionally harm the participant.	Participants	All Zoom meetings will have passcodes sent to the participants' secure work email addresses. Researcher will keep the 'participants' tab open during the interview, to ensure no one enters the waiting room or the meeting unseen. If the meeting is hacked and someone does manage to enter, the meeting will be immediately ended and a new passcode will be sent.	Rare	Minor	1				
The interview is overheard by others who are not the	Participants and researcher	Researcher will request that the Zoom meeting is accessed in a private location, with a closed door	Unlikely	Minor	2				

Description of Hazard (only include significant hazards inherent within the task or the activity.)	Person(s) at risk e.g. staff, students, unexpected persons, etc.	Current control measures in place	Current risk rating			Further control measures required and by whom and when (usually only necessary where the risk rating is either high or medium)	Final risk rating		
			Likelihood	Severity or impact	Risk Rating		Likelihood	Severity or impact	Risk Rating
<p>participant or the researcher.</p> <p>Information given during the interview may be overheard and no longer be secure or confidential. This could potentially socially or professionally harm the participant and the researcher.</p>		and using head phones. This request will be made in the participant information sheet and when setting up the interviews.							
During the interviews there may be some form of disclosure	Participants, members of school staff, parents/carers or children	Participants will be informed in the participant information sheet and in the interview briefing that any disclosures will need to be passed on. If a disclosure is made during the interviews that suggests any persons have been harmed or require protection or safeguarding, it will be reported to the academy trust DSL promptly. The researcher will also inform their supervisors.	Possible	Moderate (but would depend on the disclosure)	6				

Signature				
No revisions made				
Changes to activity, hazards, precautions or risks noted in text.				

7. Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

New teachers' experiences of instructional coaching

Researcher: Kate Forbes

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN
26/05/2023 AND 31/12/2023

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet.		
	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study with the researcher or a member of senior leadership at your school/trust?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study unless you request to be named?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are free to withdraw from this study at any time prior to your chosen interview date. • You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing. • Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your rights. • Following your interview, you can withdraw your data any time up to 3rd January 2024. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my interview being video and audio recorded via Zoom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored securely and shared with other researchers for use in future projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of research participant:	
Print name:	Date:

8. Introductory Email

For my doctoral studies, I am completing a study into **new teachers experiences of instructional coaching**. I am writing to request your participation in the study, which will involve a **45-60 minute interview**.

This is an exciting opportunity to increase our understanding of how new teachers experience instructional coaching as part of their training and I would share my findings with you and your academy trust.

The interview will be on Zoom, at a time of your choosing during the autumn term. I am also requesting to interview other trainee teachers.

The interviews, and your participation in the interviews, will be confidential. The analysis of the interviews, alongside the coaching conversation recordings, will be used in my thesis which will be published in 2025. There is no obligation to participate.

Please read the Participant Information Sheet (attached) for more information and, if you are happy to participate, please:

- 1. Sign and return the consent form (also attached) to me via email ahead of our interview**
- 2. Complete this short form <https://forms.office.com/e/tjPXSR9pMi> so that we can arrange an interview date.**

As a teacher, I know how busy this term is, and I appreciate you taking the time to read through this email.

Many thanks

Kate Forbes

Doctoral Researcher
Brunel University