

5 C's of Novice Elementary Head Teachers Instructional Coaching for Beginning Teachers



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ABSTRACT: In the Philippine educational setting, novice elementary head teachers face the challenge of providing instructional coaching to beginning teachers. These head teachers, with three years or less of experience in their roles, must demonstrate their competence and effectiveness during this period.

This study strived to determine the challenges of novice elementary head teachers in practicing instructional coaching for beginning teachers. The participants of the study were three (3) novice elementary school heads in the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur who participated voluntarily. This qualitative study employed case study design to gain comprehensive understanding of the different challenges that novice elementary head teachers encountered when practicing instructional coaching for beginning teachers. The data was gathered through each informant's voice-recorded narrative and analyzed thematically.

Findings showed that novice elementary head teachers face several challenges in instructional coaching, including gaining the trust of beginning teachers, overcoming resistance to feedback, and balancing coaching with administrative duties. A lack of resources, time, and comprehensive digital tools further complicates their ability to effectively support and track teacher progress. Enhanced training and technical assistance are needed to improve coaching efficacy and manage workloads. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Novice elementary head teachers should prioritize relationship-building and communication skills development through ongoing training and mentorship. Additionally, advocating for adequate resources and support systems is crucial to bolster coaching effectiveness. Investing in professional development tailored to instructional coaching practices equips novice head teachers with the necessary tools and strategies to navigate these challenges effectively, ultimately enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in their schools.

KEYWORDS: beginning teachers, challenges, instructional coaching, novice elementary head teachers

INTRODUCTION

Instructional coaching is a professional development strategy that helps teachers improve their teaching practices and student learning results. Supervisors, head teachers, principals, or anyone in a leadership role have a crucial responsibility in offering personalized coaching support to educators, addressing their unique needs and challenges (Olsson, 2019). Through consistent feedback, guidance, and access to resources, these mentors help teachers improve their teaching methods (Cueto, 2022), adjust to new educational approaches, and better support the unique needs of their students (Morales, 2021). Studies indicate that when teachers receive coaching, they show higher levels of confidence (García & Weiss, 2019), enthusiasm, and a greater openness to trying out new teaching methods. This ultimately results in better academic performance for students (Kapp, 2023).

In the Philippines, head teachers play a crucial role in guiding and supporting new teachers, adding to their already extensive responsibilities. Firstly, they handle administrative tasks such as ensuring compliance with DepEd orders, assisting in the creation of school improvement plans, and reporting learning outcomes to stakeholders. Additionally, head teachers mentor new educators during their early years in the profession (Arrieta, 2020). They bring a wealth of experience and expertise, offering valuable insights, feedback, and encouragement to help beginning teachers navigate classroom complexities (Iballa, 2021).

5 C's of Novice Elementary Head Teachers Instructional Coaching for Beginning Teachers

Moreover, they provide guidance on instructional strategies and classroom management techniques, fostering opportunities for growth (Valdez, 2020). Ultimately, head teachers support new teachers in overcoming early career challenges and thriving as educators (Beam, 2020).

However, the truth is that not all head teachers possess the required skills and experience to effectively mentor novice educators, especially those who have recently been promoted to leadership roles (Haan, 2019). Insufficient preparation and a lack of understanding can pose significant challenges in teacher development and school management (Tan, 2023). Head teachers who are new to their positions may feel overwhelmed by the numerous responsibilities that come with their administrative roles, which can leave them with limited time and energy to dedicate to mentorship and coaching (Wyk, 2019). In addition, individuals who lack adequate training or mentorship may find it challenging to effectively approach, guide, and support new teachers (Beam, 2020). As a result, valuable chances for professional development and instructional enhancement may be overlooked. It is crucial to prioritize continuous professional development and establish robust support systems for head teachers. This will ensure they are well-equipped to serve as mentors and leaders in the education system (Tan, 2023).

In the context of this study, educators in the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur have noticed that many newly promoted head teachers, particularly in elementary levels, are facing challenges when it comes to demonstrating and implementing instructional coaching in the most effective manner. This result is also a product of the initial interviews conducted by the researchers of this study. The findings indicate that although these head teachers possess strong skills in administrative tasks and school management, they face challenges in providing effective mentorship and coaching to beginning teachers in the classroom due to a lack of proper training and support. This lack of skills and knowledge presents considerable challenges not just for the growth of new teachers, but also for the overall standard of teaching and learning in schools within the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur.

METHODOLOGY

In conducting this research, the researchers employed a case study as a qualitative research method. The Case Study design is a qualitative research method that allows for a thorough examination of multiple cases within a specific context (Hunziker, 2021). This approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon by delving deep into each case. Every case is a distinct occurrence or illustration, enabling researchers to delve into different viewpoints, experiences, and factors that impact the phenomenon being studied (Mehta, 2020). This approach usually entails gathering and examining a diverse range of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts, to reveal patterns, themes, and insights across different cases (Halkias, 2022). Through an in-depth analysis of various cases within the public elementary schools in the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur, the researchers gained a comprehensive understanding of the different experiences, contexts, and factors that shaped the instructional coaching practices of newly promoted head teachers. By conducting thorough interviews and making observations, the researchers discovered similarities and differences among cases which allowed them to identify the main challenges, barriers, and factors that contribute to effective instructional coaching.

The participants of the study were three (3) novice elementary head teachers in the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur. The researchers employed purposive sampling in selecting the participants using inclusion criteria as follows: 1) recently been promoted to the position of head teacher, 2) with three years of experience or less, and 3) with beginning teachers currently coaching. The instrument used in the study was an interview guide, which contained a list of questions developed by the researchers. Prior to the conduct of the study, informed consent forms were developed and provided to the targeted elementary school head teachers, outlining the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Subsequently, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the selected school head teachers. Researchers sought permission to use audio and video recorders during the interviews; if not permitted, notes were taken to document the discussions. Personal visits to the schools were made to ensure convenience for the participants and to create a comfortable interview environment.

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were subjected to coding and thematic analysis. This analytical approach involved identifying recurring patterns, themes, and insights within the data to generate meaningful interpretations and conclusions. By systematically analyzing the responses of the participants, the researchers uncovered the key challenges influencing instructional coaching practices among novice elementary head teachers in the 2nd District Ilocos Sur.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme: 5 C's of Novice Elementary Head Teachers Instructional Coaching for Beginning Teachers

This study explores the challenges of novice elementary head teachers in practicing instructional coaching for beginning teachers. Novice elementary head teachers navigate a complicated landscape through various sub-themes, such as Challenge of Building Connection and Engagement, Challenge of Receiving and Giving Feedback, Challenge of Balancing Efficiency, Challenge of Securing Adequate Resources and Support, and Challenge of Obtaining Professional Development.

5 C's of Novice Elementary Head Teachers Instructional Coaching for Beginning Teachers

Sub-theme 1: Challenge of Building Connection and Engagement

This study presents a notable challenge of building connection and engagement between novice head teachers and beginning teachers. As what participant 1 stated, "When I first started practicing instructional coaching, one of the main challenges was gaining the trust of beginning teachers. Many were apprehensive about being observe and feared that coaching was just another form of evaluation". School heads revealed that they faced difficulties in gaining trust and building rapport with beginning teachers who were apprehensive and reluctant. A strong foundation of trust is essential for effective instructional coaching. Novice head teachers, who are still acclimating to their leadership roles, might find it challenging to establish this trust due to their lack of experience, leading to uncertainties and hesitations that can affect their ability to connect with new teachers. Conversely, beginning teachers may be hesitant to fully engage with someone new to their leadership role. Additionally, beginning teachers might not feel comfortable sharing their struggles or asking for help from someone who is also relatively new to their position. According to Lincuna & Caingcoy (2020), teachers often view class supervision negatively. Rahman, et al (2020) noted that teacher's attitude is considered challenge to successful coaching. Furthermore, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated that loneliness significantly influences teachers. However, instructional coaches, who work closely with teachers, may help eliminate this feeling. Studies, such as those by García & Weiss (2019), indicate that teachers who receive coaching exhibit higher levels of confidence. Additionally, Morettini et al. (2019) revealed that beginning teachers develop resilience when they feel accepted by their school community. Consequently, mentoring, whether formal or informal, enhances beginning teachers' feelings of acceptance, which can, in turn, mitigate their perceptions of unpreparedness for the demands of teaching in high-needs schools. The authors suggested that teachers who struggle early in their careers rely largely on the support and collaboration of their peers as a means of encouragement and staying optimistic (Rippon & Martin, 2006). Therefore, instructional coaches must recognize novice teachers' needs and provide guidance. Nakamura et al. (2009) described an ideal mentor as one who serves as an advisor, sponsor, host, exemplar, and guide to a novice who is moving from dependence and inexperience toward independence and proficiency.

Sub-theme 2: Challenge of Receiving and Giving Feedback

This study elaborates a significant challenge of communication between head teachers and beginning teachers particularly in receiving and giving feedback. Participant 1 and 2 stated, "Some new teachers are resistance to feedback. Sometimes, there are some beginning teachers who are feeling, feeling knows everything". Novice elementary head teachers shared that there are beginning teachers who are not open to receiving constructive criticism or guidance, potentially hindering their professional growth. These beginning teachers react defensively to suggestions or feedback, possibly due to insecurity or a lack of experience. These indicate that there are some beginning teachers who exhibit overconfidence or an unwillingness to learn, assuming they have all the necessary knowledge and skills.

Through consistent feedback, guidance, and access to resources, mentors help teachers improve their teaching methods (Cueto, 2022), adapt to new educational approaches, and better support their students' unique needs (Morales, 2021). However, principals find it challenging to coach teachers with higher educational attainment, such as master's and doctorate degrees, due to differing standards (Lincuna & Caingcoy, 2020). Additionally, instructional coaches face resistance to change, as teachers are often pessimistic about new approaches. Lincuna & Caingcoy (2020) noted that teacher-coachees frequently refuse to adapt to changes and reforms resulting from class observations or coaching programs. In another study, Rahman, et al (2020) revealed that resistance to change hinders successful coaching.

Effective instructional coaching relies heavily on clear, open, and ongoing communication. Novice head teachers may struggle to find the right balance in their communication, being supportive yet authoritative. Miscommunication or lack of clarity can lead to misunderstandings, hindering the coaching process. Effective feedback requires strong communication skills. Novice head teachers might struggle with articulating their observations and suggestions clearly and encouraging rather than critical. Beginning teachers may resist feedback due to fear of judgment or a lack of confidence. Novice head teachers must find ways to address this resistance and encourage beginning teachers to be open in receiving feedback and have growth mindset.

Sub-theme 3: Challenge of Balancing Efficiency

Novice elementary head teachers often face time management issues as they juggle various responsibilities. The challenge of balancing efficiency significantly impacts novice elementary head teachers in practicing instructional coaching for beginning teachers. Struggling to manage time and administrative tasks efficiently can limit the head teachers' availability for coaching sessions, reducing the quality and frequency of support provided to new teachers. This inefficiency may lead to inadequate feedback, insufficient professional development opportunities, and delayed implementation of instructional improvements. Consequently, beginning teachers may not receive the guidance they need to develop their skills and confidence, ultimately affecting the overall teaching quality and student outcomes in the school.

5 C's of Novice Elementary Head Teachers Instructional Coaching for Beginning Teachers

Two of the participants highlighted the delicate balance of administrative and instructional duties, as mentioned by participant 1, "There are overlapping activities of teachers and school heads. This means teachers and school heads often face overlapping responsibilities, which become particularly burdensome during busy terms when administrative duties intensify. In addition, participant 3 recounted his experience as demanding and stressful. He elaborated, "During a particular busy term when administrative duties increased, leaving me with less time to devote to coaching. When coaching demands increase, it can also lead to burn out, making it harder to maintain the same level of energy and focus across all responsibilities". This situation reduces the time available for instructional coaching, leading to increased stress and potential burnout. The heightened coaching demands during these periods make it difficult to sustain the necessary energy and focus across all tasks, underscoring the need for improved time management and support.

In a subsequent study, Lincuna & Caingcoy (2020) stressed that time constraint is a real struggle for school leaders. They often fail to provide instructional support to teachers due to their divided attention which is mainly on their administrative functions. Likewise, Rahman, et al (2020) revealed that school administrators have limited time in performing their functions as instructional chiefs due to engagement in external tasks. These conflicting schedules and activities hinder successful coaching. Tope (2023) suggests that school coaches need more sufficient time to conduct classroom observations, provide technical assistance and feedback, and monitoring instructional reforms.

Sub-theme 4: Challenge of Securing Adequate Resources and Support

The challenge of securing adequate resources and support significantly affects novice elementary head teachers in practicing instructional coaching for beginning teachers. Limited access to necessary resources, such as instructional materials, and technological tools, hampers their ability to provide effective coaching. Without sufficient support from the Division Office, these head teachers may struggle to implement coaching strategies, conduct meaningful classroom observations, and offer valuable feedback. Consequently, beginning teachers may not receive the comprehensive guidance needed to improve their teaching practices, ultimately impacting their development and student learning outcomes.

Reading through the statements shared by the participants, novice elementary head teachers reported facing unique challenges of securing adequate resources and support to instructional coaching. As what participant 1 and 3 emphasized, "Several resources and support elements are lacking. There should be more comprehensive digital tools for tracking teacher progress and facilitating communication would streamline the coaching process and make it more efficient. There is lack of technical support in my current role. There should have constant provision of Technical Assistance (TA) from the Division to better support my role as instructional coach. I do not have any tool to measure the effectiveness of my instructional coaching". The challenges outlined highlight significant gaps in resources and support for instructional coaching. The absence of comprehensive digital tools for tracking teacher progress and facilitating communication impedes efficiency. Furthermore, the lack of technical support and a means to measure coaching effectiveness underscores the need for consistent provision of Technical Assistance (TA) and tools that can objectively assess coaching outcomes, ensuring effective support for instructional coaches in their roles.

The current study coincides with Hamad, et al (2021) when they stressed that lack of school resources is one of the main struggles of school leaders in implementing coaching programs. According to them, without adequate resources, technological tools, and funding for professional development, school leaders find it challenging to provide the necessary support and guidance to new teachers. Additionally, limited resources constrain opportunities for collaborative learning and mentorship, which are vital for the growth and confidence of beginning teachers. The absence of sufficient resources not only affects the quality of coaching but also places additional stress on school leaders, who must navigate these limitations while striving to foster a supportive and effective teaching environment.

Sub-theme 5: Challenge of Obtaining Professional Development

The difficulty of acquiring professional development has a considerable impact on novice elementary school principals when it comes to engaging in instructional coaching for new teachers. Limited access to relevant and ongoing professional development opportunities hampers the head teachers' ability to enhance their coaching skills and stay updated with best practices in education. Without continuous training and support, they may struggle to effectively observe classrooms, provide targeted feedback, and guide beginning teachers through instructional improvements.

All of the novice elementary head teacher participants revealed a prevalent concern on the challenge of obtaining professional development in instructional coaching. Participants 1, 2 and 3 uttered the statement, "The division should provide access to specialized training and workshops on instructional coaching." Access to specialized training and workshops on instructional coaching is crucial for novice elementary head teachers to develop the necessary skills and knowledge. Such initiatives would equip them with effective coaching techniques, enhance their ability to support beginning teachers, and

5 C's of Novice Elementary Head Teachers Instructional Coaching for Beginning Teachers

ultimately improve educational outcomes. By investing in professional development tailored to coaching practices, the division can foster a supportive environment that promotes continuous growth and effectiveness in educational leadership roles.

Walsh, et al. (2020) stated that previous studies on instructional coaching for beginning teachers lack on information on how these school coaches perform their roles toward beginning teachers (1–3 years in service). Head teachers assigned as instructional coaches in some schools, lack proper training, since master teachers and school principals are mainly sent or asked to participate. Echeche (2022) conducted a descriptive quantitative study on the coaching and mentoring practices. The respondents of the study revealed that they need professional development programs in order to improve themselves in some areas related to their function as instructional coaches. Hamad, et al (2021) suggests lack of knowledge on instructional coaching and lack of experience as an instructional coach as the main struggles of school leaders in implementing coaching programs. Furthermore, the previous study supports the result of the qualitative study conducted by Rahman, et al (2020). Lack of experience and lack of knowledge about instructional leadership are some of the factors leading to poor performance as instructional leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Novice school heads encounter significant challenges as they practice instructional coaching to beginning teachers. These challenges encompass building connections and engagement with teachers, navigating feedback dynamics, balancing efficiency amidst overlapping responsibilities, securing adequate resources and support, and accessing essential professional development. Addressing these challenges is essential for enhancing coaching efficacy and ultimately fostering a supportive and effective learning environment. By investing in targeted support, training, and resource allocation, educational institutions can empower novice elementary head teachers to effectively guide and mentor beginning teachers, thereby promoting continuous improvement and student success.
2. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Novice elementary head teachers should prioritize relationship-building and communication skills development through ongoing training and mentorship. Additionally, advocating for adequate resources and support systems is crucial to bolster coaching effectiveness. Investing in professional development tailored to instructional coaching practices equips novice head teachers with the necessary tools and strategies to navigate these challenges effectively, ultimately enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in their schools.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

While this research provides significant insights tailored to novice head teachers in practicing instructional coaching to beginning teachers, there are a few limitations. One limitation of the study is the small sample size, which included only three novice elementary head teachers from the 2nd District of Ilocos Sur. This limited number of participants may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of head teachers or educational contexts beyond the study area. Additionally, relying solely on interviews as the primary data collection method might limit the depth of understanding regarding the challenges faced by novice head teachers in instructional coaching. A more diverse range of data sources, such as classroom observations or feedback from other stakeholders like learners and parents, could provide a more comprehensive perspective on the topic. Moreover, the study's focus on a specific geographical location and educational context may limit the applicability of findings to different educational settings with varying organizational structures or resource allocations.

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5 C's of Novice Elementary Head Teachers Instructional Coaching for Beginning Teachers

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