Administrators' Instructional Leadership Perspective of the Role of Instructional Coaches and Teacher Librarians: A Comparative Examination

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The purpose of this collective case study was to develop an understanding of why California K–12 public school administrators distribute instructional leadership responsibilities to either instructional coaches or teacher librarians and how the two roles compare within the context of the implementation of the California Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (ELA/Literacy). Results demonstrated that administrators' personal values influence their decisions to select and utilize instructional coaches or teacher librarians to provide instructional leadership. Instructional coaches are considered to be extensions of administrators as instructional leaders in ELA while teacher librarians are considered resources who may be called upon to provide occasional instructional support in ELA.

Introduction

The 2010 adoption of the *California Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (CCSS ELA) created a need for school leaders to identify and deliver intensive professional learning to their teachers. To meet this need, California kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) public school districts hired large numbers of instructional coaches to assist site administrators with this instructional leadership task (Udesky, 2015). Teacher librarians (also titled "school librarians" and "media specialists"), educators who have been specifically trained and credentialed to provide instructional leadership in the CCSS ELA and are mandated by California Education Code to be employed in California's school libraries, are not usually considered for this task (American Association of School Librarians [AASL], 2018; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CCTC], 2014; California Department of Education [CDE], 2011, 2012, 2015a; *California Education Code*, n.d.; Williams, 2015). The problem is that California K-12 public school administrators are electing to employ instructional coaches instead of teacher librarians to provide instructional leadership in the implementation of the CCSS ELA (Udesky, 2015; Williams, 2015). Since school leaders often lack knowledge and understanding of the instructional role of the teacher librarian (Church, 2008, 2010; Levitov, 2013; Shannon, 2012; VanTuyle & Watkins, 2012) and the roles of an instructional coach and teacher librarian appear similar in nature (AASL, 2009, 2016a; CCTC, 2015; Church, 2011; Knight, 2007; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Marzano & Simms, 2013; Neumerski, 2013), research is needed to examine from the administrator's perspective how the roles compare in practice.

Theoretical Framework

Instructional leadership is defined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) as a role in which a leader engages with three distinct dimensions: the school's mission, the instructional program, and a positive school learning climate. The first dimension, defining the school's mission, is comprised of two functions: framing and communicating the goals of the school. As such, the school leader is expected to establish and support clear, specific, and measurable goals that focus upon student academic achievement. Managing the instructional program serves as the second dimension and is supported by three leadership functions that include the supervision and evaluation of instruction, curriculum coordination, and the monitoring of student progress. These functions require that leaders possess expertise in teaching and learning and commit to a deep level of engagement with the school's instructional program. The third dimension is broad in scope and consists of promoting a positive school learning climate by advancing a culture of continuous academic improvement. This requires that school leaders seek to protect instructional time, maintain high visibility by regularly engaging with the instructional program, promote professional learning, and provide incentives for teachers' efforts and incentives for student learning.

Though this instructional leadership model has been widely used in empirical investigations, it offers only a list of behaviors and actions exhibited by one individual. It does not provide an opportunity to develop an understanding of the process behind enacting these behaviors and how they relate to the transformation of teaching and learning. Spillane (2006) sought to address this by engaging in a longitudinal mixed-methods study to examine the practice of leadership in 15 urban K–5 and K–8 schools. He based his research upon two assumptions: (a) that school leadership is best understood by considering leadership tasks, and (b) that leadership practice is distributed among leaders, followers, and the school's situation or context (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2014). Through in-depth observations and interviews with both formal and informal leaders over a 4-year period, a theory of distributed leadership emerged. Based upon distributed cognition and activity theories, the distributed leadership theory consists of a framework of three essential elements: leadership practice, the interactions of leaders and followers, and aspects of their situation. Within this framework, the situation is considered to be the defining element since particular aspects of a situation both influence and are produced by school leaders. Distributed leadership theory thus serves as a lens for generating insights into how leadership might be practiced more effectively. It encourages researchers to consider how the aspects of a situation enable and constrain leadership practice through the cooperative interactions of leaders and followers (Johnston, 2015; Spillane, 2006; Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2016).

School administrators are under tremendous pressure to increase student achievement in a high-stakes testing environment (Range, Pijanowski, Duncan, Scherz, & Hvidston, 2014). This requires that they devote the majority of their attention to serving as the school's instructional leader, but time constraints, competing demands, and lack of knowledge and expertise often prevent them from fully engaging in this role (Hallinger, 2005). Based upon their extensive research on instructional leadership, Hallinger and Murphy (2013) proposed three strategies an administrator can employ to create the time and capacity needed to effectively lead learning in his or her school: (a) clarify his or her personal vision and supporting habits or tasks, (b) articulate a collective instructional leadership role, and (c) enable others to act by establishing team leadership structures. Distributed leadership theory supports this by acknowledging that administrators need to recruit multiple leaders that possess particular skill sets and dedicated time to focus upon engaging in

curriculum and instructional improvements. This theory thus serves as a framework for developing an understanding of why and how California K–12 school administrators distribute instructional leadership responsibilities, particularly in regard to the provision of professional learning, to either instructional coaches or teacher librarians and how the interactions among the leaders enable them to meet CCSS ELA instructional goals (Neumerski, 2013; Spillane, 2006).

Review of the Literature

Effective professional development is defined as "structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes" (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017, p. 2). Historically, school administrators have relied upon outside vendors, such as textbook publishers, to provide stand-alone or short-term professional development sessions for teachers when adopting new initiatives. However, research has demonstrated that teachers generally fail to operationalize the knowledge presented in these types of sessions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Marzano & Simms, 2013). In 2017 the Learning Policy Institute released a report synthesizing a review of 35 methodologically rigorous studies from the past three decades that found positive links between professional development, instructional practices, and student achievement. Within these studies, researchers identified the following seven features of effective professional development:

1. focuses on content
2. incorporates active learning opportunities aligned to adult learning theory
3. supports job-embedded collaboration
4. models effective practice
5. includes the support of experts and coaching
6. provides opportunities for reflection and feedback
7. is implemented over a sustained period (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

In 2016 a nationwide survey was administered to examine the state of professional learning and determine how to best support educators in their current positions. Over 6,300 teachers responded to the 60-item survey aligned to the *Standards for Professional Learning* developed in collaboration by Learning Forward, a national professional learning organization, and 40 other professional and educational organizations. A key finding demonstrated that teachers report they are not provided adequate time during the instructional day to practice and apply skills learned in professional development. The report therefore recommends that school leaders provide more opportunities for continuous, job-embedded professional learning in the form of instructional coaching and participation in professional learning communities (*The State of Teacher Professional Learning*, 2017).

Both the *Common Core State Standards System Implementation Plan* and the *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (ELA Framework) indicate that strong instructional leadership and well-prepared teachers are essential for success (CDE, 2014, 2015a). Though the CCSS ELA has been integrated into the curriculum since 2010, 50.12% of California students did not meet proficiency levels on the 2017-2018 Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for English Language Arts/Literacy (CDE, 2019). Consequently, administrators will need to continue to focus efforts upon improving student proficiency in this area.

Instructional Coaches and Teacher Librarians

A close examination of the instructional coaching model that is currently used in many schools, the Big Four Model, and the program standards that serve as the foundation for obtaining the California Teacher Librarian Services Credential, *Teacher Librarian Services Credential and Special Class Authorization in Information and Digital Literacy Program Standards*, reveals that the expectations for the instructional roles of both instructional coaches and teacher librarians are similar in nature (CCTC, 2015; CDE, 2015a; Knight, 2007; Marzano & Simms, 2013). Both are experts in providing professional development. Both establish collaborative partnerships with teachers in the planning, delivery, and assessment of instruction in order to improve student achievement (see Table 1).

Table 1

Comparison of Instructional Coaching and Teacher Librarian Guidelines for Practice

Big Four Model of Instructional Coaching	California Teacher Librarian Program Standards
A collaborative partnership in which the instructional coach and teacher work together to improve four instructional components:	Both independently and in collaboration with educational partners, teacher librarians will:
1. Student behavior: assist teachers in creating a productive learning environment by guiding them to articulate behavioral expectations, effectively correct student behavior, and increase student engagement	
2. Content knowledge: encourage teachers to develop a deep understanding of the instructional content area by helping them to access and translate state content standards into lessons and units of study	Design developmentally appropriate instruction based on the Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools (MSLS), other academic content area standards, their [teacher librarians'] knowledge of learning theory, and diverse students' interests and needs
3. Direct instruction: identify and assist in the development of instructional practices that the teacher can use to effectively guide students in mastering the content	Use a wide variety of instructional strategies and assessment tools to develop and deliver standards-based learning experiences
4. Formative assessment: assist teachers in developing formative assessments in order to identify learning targets, enable students to monitor their own progress, and provide constructive feedback	Clearly link assessment to student achievement, assess student learning, and develop interventions to maximize student learning outcomes

The roles appear to differ, however, in instructional content; instructional coaches are generally expected to focus upon implementing research-based instructional practices while teacher librarians are expected to focus upon integrating 21st century skills and multiple literacies into the curriculum. The roles also differ in role definition, qualifications, and standards and guidelines. While there is no common definition, model, or certification for general instructional coaches (Neumerski, 2013; Reddy, Glover, Kurz, & Elliott, 2019), there does exist a common definition, professional standards, and advanced preparation and certification for teacher librarians (AASL, 2010, 2016b, 2018; CCTC, 2014, 2015, 2017).

The research base for instructional coaches and teacher librarians differs quite significantly. While there is little research to demonstrate that the role of the instructional coach positively impacts student achievement (Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Neumerski, 2013), there are multiple large-scale studies (Gretes, 2013; Kaplan, 2010; *School Libraries Impact Studies*, 2013; *School Libraries Work*, 2016) that demonstrate how strong school library programs led by teacher librarians correlate with a positive impact on student achievement in ELA. One of these studies focused exclusively on California's school library programs (Achterman, 2008). There is some research to suggest that coaching improves teacher knowledge and skill, but recent studies on instructional coaching have documented recurring barriers to effective practice. These barriers include role confusion, a lack of training and support, and inability to engage in coaching work due to competing responsibilities (Bean, Draper, Hall, Vandermolen, & Zigmond, 2010; Desmione & Pak, 2017; Galluci, DeVoogt Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Jacobs, Boardman, Potvin, & Wang, 2018; Knight, 2012; Lowenhaupt, McKinney, & Reeves, 2014; Lynch & Ferguson, 2010; Range et al., 2014; Reddy et al., 2019; Stock & Duncan, 2010; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010).

California teacher librarian staffing discrepancies. Despite education code mandates, positive school library research, teacher librarian credentialing standards, and clear CCSS ELA connections, California continues to maintain one of the worst ratios of teacher librarians to students in the United States (CSLA, 2019; Tuck & Holmes, 2016). At the time of the 2008 statewide school library study, California maintained only one teacher librarian for every 5,965 students, which was seven times below the national average (Achterman, 2008). Several years of state budget cuts beginning in 2009 served to increase this ratio as districts eliminated teacher librarian positions, dropping California public schools to 50th in the nation (California State Auditor, 2016; *Education Stakeholders*, 2015; Mongeau, 2014; Neason, 2015; Tuck & Holmes, 2016). In the 2014–2015 academic year, the ratio of teacher librarians to California students was 1 to 7,187, which falls far below both the *Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools* (MSLS) standard of 1 to 785 and the national average of 1 to 1,023 (California State Auditor, 2016; CDE, 2015b, 2019).

There are three possible reasons to explain this disparity. First, state law does not clearly define the minimum type or level of library services that school districts should provide. Districts can choose to employ only one teacher librarian to provide services to all schools, contract with a county office of education that employs a teacher librarian, or employ classified staff to offer only basic library operations (California State Auditor, 2016). Secondly, California does not allocate dedicated funding to provide the MSLS-prescribed staffing and supplies for its school libraries. Districts and school sites are given discretion in deciding how to distribute their annual allocations, so funding is directed to the areas in which school leaders see the greatest need or place the most value (Achterman, 2008; California State Auditor, 2016; CDE, 2016a; Mongeau, 2014). Third, according to several studies and surveys conducted since 1989, school principals know very little about the components of effective school library programs and are thus unlikely to value them (Levitov, 2013).

Methodology

This research employed a collective case study methodology. The setting for this study was comprehensive K–12 California public school districts that primarily employed either instructional coaches or teacher librarians at individual school sites. California public school districts were selected as the context since they are governed by California Education Code and held accountable for instructing students according to content standards adopted by the California State Board of Education. Two cases were selected to illustrate differing administrators' perspectives of instructional leadership: Case One consisted of a school in which an instructional coach was employed. Case Two consisted of a school in which a teacher librarian was employed. For each case, the procedures were replicated three times in different school districts located throughout California in an effort to predict similar results (Yin, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of why California K-12 public school administrators distribute instructional leadership responsibilities to either instructional coaches or teacher librarians and how the two roles compare within the context of the implementation of the CCSS ELA. Data collected from these questions were used to analyze how the roles of the instructional coach and teacher librarian compared in practice and to generate insights into how leadership might be practiced more effectively. RQs 1, 3, and 5 apply to Case One, and RQs 2, 4, and 6 apply to Case Two.

RQ 1: Why do administrators select instructional coaches to help them provide instructional leadership?

RQ 2: Why do administrators select teacher librarians to help them provide instructional leadership?

RQ 3: How do administrators and instructional coaches work together to provide professional learning within daily instructional practice?

RQ 4: How do administrators and teacher librarians work together to provide professional learning within daily instructional practice?

RQ 5: How do administrators evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional coaches' instructional leadership roles?

RQ 6: How do administrators evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher librarians' instructional leadership roles?

Following the selection of a school site, each setting's participants were identified as the (a) district administrator that provided support for instructional coaches or teacher librarians at each school site within the district, (b) school site administrator, and (c) school site's instructional coach or teacher librarian. This yielded three participants for each of the three settings within Case One and Case Two (see Tables 2 and 3), resulting in a total of 18 participants for this study (see Table 4). Pseudonyms are used for the names of all settings and participants.

Table 2
Case One Settings

Setting	CA Region	Students	Teachers	Administrators	Instructional Coaches	Smarter Balanced ELA 2016 Results: Met/Exceed

Adams Unified School District (USD)	Southern Urban	33,400	1,485	104	27	31%
Acacia Elementary School (K–6)		604	26	2	0.5	30%
Jefferson USD	Northern Urban	32,000	1,590	124	56	54%
Juniper Elementary School (K–5)		443	21	1	2	33%
Lincoln USD	Central Rural	3,300	166	16	10	29%
Lemon Middle School (6–8)		750	37	3	1	27%

Table 3
Case Two Settings

	CA Region	Students	Teachers	Administrators	Teacher Librarians	Smarter Balanced ELA 2016 Results: Met/Exceed
Madison High School District (HSD)	Southern Urban	40,700	1,947	135	24	54%
Magnolia High School (9–12)		2.095	49	5	1	43%
Roosevelt HSD	Central Urban	38,700	1,697	129	18	52%

Redwood High School (9–12)		2,277	102	6	1	50%
Taft USD	Central Urban	10,900	514	50	9	36%
Torrey Elementary School (K–6)		774	36	2	0.5	54%

Table 4
Participant Demographics

Case	Setting	Position	Name	Current Role in Setting	Years in Current Role
One	Adams USD Acacia ES	District Administrator	Alice	Director	6
		Site Administrator	Angela	Principal	8
		Instructional Coach	Audrey	Instructional Coach	4
	Jefferson USD Juniper ES	District Administrator	Jeanette	Director	5
		Site Administrator	Joanna	Principal	2
		Instructional Coach	Julie	Instructional Coach	1
	Lincoln USD Lemon MS	District Administrator	Laurel	Director	5
		Site Administrator	Leon	Principal	3
		Instructional Coach	Lynn	Instructional Coach	5
Two	Madison HSD Magnolia HS	District Administrator	Manuel	Director	3
		Site Administrator	Michael	Assistant Principal	2
		Teacher Librarian	Monica	Teacher Librarian	10
	Roosevelt HSD Redwood HS	District Administrator	Rachel	Director	1
		Site Administrator	Richard	Principal	2
		Teacher Librarian	Roxanne	Teacher Librarian	9
	Taft USD Torrey ES	District Administrator	Tanya	Assistant Superintendent	3
		Site Administrator	Tomas	Principal	5
		Teacher Librarian	Tracey	Teacher Librarian	3

Multiple sources of data collection included (a) interviews and focus groups with participants, (b) observations of participants, and (c) examination of relevant documents within each case. Data collection was completed between April 2017 and September 2017.

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with administrators in each setting, first with the setting's district administrator participant and then the site administrator participant. Instructional coaches and teacher librarians were observed as they conducted their duties over the course of one instructional day. Throughout the observation, field notes were collected to document how their activities aligned with the instructional leadership perceptions provided by the administrators in their interviews. Following each site's observation, a focus group

was held with both the instructional coach or teacher librarian and his or her site administrator. The purpose of this focus group was to observe how the two participants interacted, corroborate the data collected in interviews and observation, and obtain the participants' views regarding how they work together to provide instructional leadership in the implementation of the CCSS ELA. Relevant documents were collected and reviewed to corroborate and augment evidence found in the literature and data collected from the interviews, observations, and focus groups. These documents included each district's Local Control and Accountability Plan and each school site's Single Plan for Student Achievement. Both documents are required by the CDE and outline how the district/school intends to meet its annual goals. Job descriptions and formal evaluation forms utilized for the instructional coaches and teacher librarians were also collected from each setting to provide data to address all research questions.

Data Analysis

Within-case analyses were first conducted using the data collected from the three settings in Case One (administrative perception of the instructional coach) and three settings in Case Two (administrative perception of the teacher librarian). The multiple sources of information were closely reviewed and coded. Codes were grouped into 11 categories for each case, from which the same three themes emerged: Challenge, Relationships, and Values (see Table 5). Following the within-case analyses of Case One and Case Two, a cross-case analysis was conducted by establishing word tables that displayed each case's categorical data to identify similarities and differences (see Table 5). The themes were then interpreted to develop a naturalistic generalization regarding administrators' perspectives of how instructional coaches and teacher librarians contributed to instructional leadership in the implementation of the CCSS ELA.

Table 5

Comparison of Categorical Data within Themes

Themes	Case One Categories	Case Two Categories
Challenge	Needs	Needs
	Accountability	Accountability
	Limitation	Limitation
	Evolving Role	Ignorance
Relationships	Support	Support
	Trust	Trust
	Communication	Communication
	Extension	Resource
Values	Prior Experience	Prior Experience
	Disposition	Disposition
	Satisfaction	Satisfaction

Summary of Findings

The following sections discuss the themes of Challenge and Relationships within the context of responses to the research questions for Case One and Case Two. The Values theme was embedded throughout responses to the research questions in both cases and is addressed in the cross-case analysis.

Research Question Responses: Case One

RQ 1. The administrators in Case One were unanimous in sharing that their decision to select instructional coaches to help them provide instructional leadership in ELA was in response to needs created by similar challenges they've experienced within each of their school districts.

     Challenge: Student achievement in ELA. Without fail, all administrators noted that their ELA instructional leadership decisions are driven by student achievement data. They noted grave concerns in two areas – first, that even though the CCSS ELA have been in place since 2010, students are still not close to achieving the expected level of proficiency on the state's Smarter Balanced ELA assessment. Secondly, that teachers do not adequately comprehend the depth of rigor required by the CCSS ELA and are not implementing the standards as intended in their classroom instructional programs.

     Challenge: Need for embedded instructional support. Each of the three settings had instructional coaches in place prior to the implementation of the CCSS ELA. However, the district administrators noted that the role of the instructional coaches changed considerably in response to the shifts in teaching and learning required by the CCSS ELA. The role evolved from one of providing traditional stand-alone workshops at the district level to embedded instructional support at the site level. Embedded support consists of the administrator directing an instructional coach to work in-depth with teachers on the examination of student data, implementation of instructional strategies, and classroom management via a coaching model that includes modeling, co-teaching, reflection, and feedback.

RQ 3. Relationships were a prominent theme in addressing how administrators and instructional coaches work together to provide professional learning within instructional practice.

     Relationships: **Instructional coach as extension of site administrator.** The site administrators consider their instructional coaches to be extensions of themselves, using terms such as "my left hand," "another pair of eyes," "my eyes, ears," and "speaks with my voice" to describe their significance. The site administrators shared that since they are limited in their ability to provide instructional leadership, they greatly appreciate having another individual on site that can function as an instructional expert; especially one that has time to provide necessary support to teachers.
The site administrators view their relationships with their instructional coaches as the key to enabling them to realize their instructional visions for their school sites. The instructional coach serves as a reminder to site administrators; the coach is able to continually revisit the established plans, goals, and expectations and let the administrators know if they are on track or need to change direction. The site administrators also value how the instructional coach can collaborate with coaches at other school sites within the district and bring resources back to their home sites that will enable them to meet the professional learning needs of their teachers.

     Relationships: Trust. All administrators, both district and site-level, noted that trust must first be built between instructional coaches and classroom teachers to realize successful embedded professional learning. The intentional building of relationships and regular communication

between administrators, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers were noted as primary methods for achieving this.

Challenge: Limitations. Limitations such as teacher resistance, the need to manage multiple subjects or initiatives, and working with new teachers and classroom management were identified as potential barriers to the instructional coach's effective provision of support. Some teachers just do not want to be coached; they do not share when they've attended professional development sessions, refuse to schedule time with an instructional coach for follow up, and do not welcome coaches into their professional learning communities. Though both administrators and instructional coaches shared that it can be easier to make inroads with new teachers than with veteran teachers, working with new teachers often requires that significant time be spent on developing classroom management skills.

"Our teacher leaders end up doing a lot of pieces" – one site administrator's words sum up the challenge faced by all administrators and instructional coaches – responsibilities that compete with the coach's ability to focus and work in-depth with teachers. Though instructional coaches may be hired to focus upon a particular subject area, such as literacy, they often end up taking on other subject areas or activities. Limited, absent, and new personnel were also noted by administrators as a challenge that limits instructional coaches from engaging in their primary work; coaches are sometimes asked or expected to fulfill the responsibilities of absent classroom teachers and site administrators. Instructional coaches are also often pulled off-site to attend district meetings and professional development or to serve at other school sites.

RQ 5. Administrators face challenges when evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional coaches' instructional leadership role.

Challenge: Evolving role. The instructional coach position appears to be an evolving role within Case One districts, one that requires continual implementation and refinement of expectations, training, and evaluation processes. None of the Case One districts require their instructional coaches to hold an advanced credential or degree above their basic teaching credential but do expect them to have knowledge of a variety of instructional practices and possess certain skills and dispositions. Each district provides their instructional coaches with frequent and varied training to fulfill their duties as outlined in the job descriptions, though this differs by district and by year. Some districts utilize formal evaluation processes that allow an administrator to specifically evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional coach's instructional leadership role as defined by the corresponding job description. Regular communication between administrators and instructional coaches is a common method of informal evaluation in all settings.

Research Question Responses: Case Two

RQ 2. All administrators acknowledged a need to provide strong instructional leadership in ELA in response to challenges they've encountered with student literacy.

Challenge: Student literacy. Across the board, administrators shared that their primary instructional goal is to improve student achievement in literacy across all subject areas. Despite this, administrators either underutilize or do not select teacher librarians to help them provide instructional leadership in ELA.

Challenge: Ignorance of teacher librarian role. All administrators acknowledged that the role of the teacher librarian has changed over the years. However, not all school personnel understand or have implemented those changes. Many administrators hold a traditional view of the teacher librarian that was shaped by their prior experiences and interactions with teacher librarians at the site level. This view is of the teacher librarian as a "keeper of the books," not an instructional leader. Because of this lack of knowledge and understanding of the role of the teacher

librarian, the administrators acknowledged that other personnel such as part-time curriculum specialists, resource teachers, and "Teachers on Special Assignment" have been assigned to provide embedded instructional support to their classroom teachers.

RQ 4. Lack of knowledge and understanding of the instructional role of the teacher librarian has prevented many administrators in Case Two from working closely together with their teacher librarians to provide professional learning within daily instructional practice. For the few that do, it is most evident within the context of relationships.

   Relationships: Teacher librarian as resource. Administrators generally view teacher librarians as experts in research and the management of instructional materials whom they can call upon to provide occasional instructional support for teachers. This support may include access to curricular materials and technology resources, assistance with the implementation of new curriculum and technology initiatives, and the teaching or co-teaching of research lessons.

   Challenges: Limitations. Within the focus groups, all teacher librarians proclaimed that they would like to be more engaged in their school sites' instructional programs but are prohibited from doing so because of challenges relating to administrative support and limited time. Scheduling difficulties resulting from being assigned to multiple school sites and the closing of the library for various school activities and management of curricular materials were identified as ongoing limitations. Both administrators and teacher librarians noted that the teacher librarians lack advocacy at the district level in the form of a specialized vision, strategic plan, and program of ongoing training. Additionally, site administrators do not often initiate or direct professional learning opportunities between the teacher librarians and classroom teachers.

RQ 6. Lack of knowledge and understanding of the teacher librarians' instructional leadership role inhibits administrators in Case Two from evaluating the effectiveness of this role.

   Challenge: Ignorance. Job descriptions define the expectations by which teacher librarians will be formally evaluated in each of the school districts. At the time of this study, teacher librarian job descriptions in two of the districts had not been updated since 1999 and did not reflect the current standards of the field. Though all three districts require their teacher librarians to hold the California Teacher Librarian Services Credential, none of them is able to formally evaluate teacher librarians according to the current California standards that serve as the foundation for the credential. Administrators recognize that both the job descriptions and evaluation processes need to be updated and streamlined.

   Challenge: Need for ongoing training. Though all teacher librarians are prepared to fulfill the duties of their positions by obtaining the California Teacher Librarian Services Credential, administrators and teacher librarians acknowledge a need for ongoing, specialized training to maintain and increase their effectiveness over time.

   Relationships: Communication. Informal evaluation processes exist within the context of the relationship between some site administrators and teacher librarians, primarily through regular communication with both the teacher librarian and the classroom teachers with whom he or she works.

Cross-Case Analysis: Values

Administrators' personal values strongly influence their decisions to select and utilize instructional coaches or teacher librarians to provide instructional leadership. Prior experience with either role has both positively and negatively impacted their ability to understand and work with individuals

in these roles. Administrators in both cases had much more experience with the role of the instructional coach, having either served as one or closely worked with one in a positive manner in the past. Except for one district administrator, none of the administrators had prior experience serving as a teacher librarian. Administrators in Case One shared that they have little to no experience with the instructional role of a teacher librarian. A few had only encountered the traditional role as "keeper of the books." Two of them had no knowledge of the teacher librarian position.

Administrators in both cases discussed dispositions that they believe to be essential to the role of an instructional leader, whether they serve in that role themselves or it is fulfilled by an instructional coach or teacher librarian. These include a goal-oriented focus on achieving the district's mission and vision and a belief that students can learn and succeed. Administrators shared that respectability is a quality that instructional leaders must demonstrate. This is developed by listening to the needs and concerns of teachers and exercising patience with them; being personable, approachable, flexible, and trustworthy; and modeling in professional development what they expect to see in the classroom.

Administrators noted their appreciation for how focused instructional coaches and teacher librarians can support them in achieving the district's mission and vision. They affirmed that they love working with K–12 students, are motivated to do "what's best for kids," and find great satisfaction in making a positive difference in their lives. They shared that they greatly value having another instructional leader in-house who can partner with and continually encourage them in achieving this satisfaction.

Discussion

This study's findings corroborate the previous research on instructional leadership and distributed leadership (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Spillane, 2006). Within the context of the implementation of the CCSS ELA, administrators in both cases affirmed that they need and want to provide strong instructional leadership. However, they acknowledged that they do not possess the capacity to fulfill this role. This necessitates that they distribute instructional leadership tasks to other school site leaders who possess particular skill sets and dedicated time to focus upon engaging in curriculum and instructional improvements (Neumerski, 2013; Spillane 2006): namely, instructional coaches and teacher librarians. These tasks primarily include the implementation of a valued form of professional learning to achieve the school's mission (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013) using embedded instructional support (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

This study provides an in-depth understanding of how the roles of the instructional coach and teacher librarian compare in providing instructional leadership in ELA from the administrator's perspective. The results demonstrate why it appears that administrators value instructional coaches over teacher librarians. Administrators' prior experience with either role greatly affected their decisions to select and distribute instructional leadership tasks to instructional coaches or teacher librarians. This also affected how well an administrator was able to cooperatively work with an instructional coach or teacher librarian. The administrators in this study considered instructional coaches to be extensions of themselves as instructional leaders in ELA and teacher librarians to be resources that they can call upon to provide occasional instructional support in ELA. A mutually supportive relationship that was focused on achieving a common vision was found to enable the successful distribution of instructional leadership. Intentional building of trust and regular communication were considered essential to establishing mutually supportive relationships. Limitations were found in both cases to constrain the effective provision of embedded professional learning.

Implications

This study's findings demonstrate that there is a need for school administrators to distribute leadership to other leaders, especially when faced with a new initiative. Administrators agree that embedded instructional support provided by site-based teacher leaders is the best form of professional learning. As such, school districts need to make it a priority to employ site-based teacher leaders such as instructional coaches and teacher librarians, even during lean budget years. However, administrators should seek to make meaningful, reflective decisions when selecting such teacher leaders to meet specific needs. If the priority is to improve student achievement in ELA or student literacy across all subject areas, a credentialed teacher librarian might be a good choice considering that he or she is a certified expert in collaborating with teachers to integrate 21st century skills and multiple literacies into the curriculum, which closely aligns to the CCSS ELA.

To minimize limitations that can inhibit the effective provision of embedded instructional support, school districts need to set the standard for how instructional leadership will be distributed at the site level. Since an administrator's prior experience impacts how he or she will work with an individual in this role, districts should seek to employ district-level administrators that have prior experience working as a site-level instructional coach or teacher librarian who can develop a vision and provide appropriate support for the population and the site-based administrators and teachers with whom they work. This district-level support should include (a) organizing the instructional coach and teacher librarian populations within the district's divisions of Educational Services, Curriculum and Instruction, or Professional Development; (b) establishing and maintaining job descriptions and formal evaluation processes that are aligned to current professional standards; (c) clearly identifying within the district's strategic plan how the population will serve as instructional leaders; and (d) providing on-going specialized professional learning opportunities for the population.

Additionally, school districts, organizations, and institutions of higher education that prepare instructional coaches and teacher librarians for their positions need to focus upon teaching trainees how to work with administrators in providing effective instructional leadership. Trainees should be taught the importance of developing a mutually supportive relationship with an administrator. Strategies to accomplish this include: (a) learning the administrator's values by inquiring about his or her professional experience and the dispositions he or she considers essential to leadership; (b) building trust with the administrator by striving to develop those dispositions in himself or herself; (c) learning the administrator's instructional vision and continually supporting him or her in achieving it; and (d) engaging in regular communication with the administrator.

Teacher librarians currently employed in schools need to be cognizant that an administrator's view of the teacher librarian position will be primarily shaped by his or her experience with them. As such, they must strive to establish a mutually supportive relationship with their administrators. In order to provide a positive model of the teacher librarian profession and function as an effective instructional leader, they must also endeavor to remain current in the school library field and actively and regularly engage with the school's instructional program.

Limitations

Limitations included generalizability of results beyond the participants in this study due to factors related to school site demographics and participant availability and knowledge. Several factors related to district settings may have limited the comparison of administrators' perspectives. First,

none of the districts specifically hired instructional coaches or teacher librarians to assist with the implementation of the CCSS ELA. They simply used the personnel who were already in place prior to the publication of the standards. Secondly, not all settings in this study employed full-time site-based instructional coaches or teacher librarians. There was one half-time instructional coach participant and one half-time teacher librarian participant in each case. Third, each case included settings of varying levels. Case One included two elementary sites and one middle school site and Case Two included two high school sites and one elementary school site. Fourth, the working relationship between the site administrators and instructional coaches or teacher librarians varied in length from less than one year to five years. Fifth, student population varied across districts in each case, resulting in differing numbers of instructional coaches and teacher librarians.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several recommendations and directions for future research can be derived from this study. Since limitations may have affected the comparison of administrator perspective across cases, it would be beneficial to replicate this collective case study with only two settings of similar populations of students and conduct interviews with participants at several sites within each setting. A related area for future study might consist of a case study of a district that employs both site level instructional coaches and teacher librarians to explore and compare how these personnel are being utilized as instructional leaders. Another direction for future study would include cases studies to examine the barriers or limitations that inhibit instructional coaches and teacher librarians from effectively providing instructional leadership.

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