

**A case study: investigating how leaders
implement a system of instructional coaching
to meet the professional learning needs of
teachers in a mainstream, all-through academy
in the UK.**

EP Option

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Total Word Count: 12,005

Tutor: Mr Robert Melville

Abstract

This proposed qualitative case study aims to investigate how leaders implement a system of instructional coaching in a mainstream, all-through academy in the UK to address teachers' professional learning needs. Informed by literature on professional learning, leadership approaches to enhance instruction and trust, this study employs a conceptual lens of habitus, field and capital to analyse leadership dynamics. Using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, it seeks to examine teachers' perceptions of the impact of coaching on their teaching, comparing them with the perceptions of leadership. The research aims to offer practical insights for practitioners and recommendations for effective instructional coaching implementation.

Key words: leadership, professional learning, instructional coaching

(100 words)

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Accountability is a contested area in schools where leaders must simultaneously balance the need for continuous improvement based upon external accountability agendas, such as league tables and Ofsted inspections, with supportive mechanisms to counteract any detrimental impacts on the culture of the organisation. Schools are affected by a wide range of internal and external factors (Di Paola and Tschanne-Moran, 2005) and leaders must make decisions to combat and mediate these. Leaders endeavour to manipulate contextual factors within the scope of their agency; therefore, depending on the contextual factors that exist, different leadership approaches may be required (Wallace and Tomlinson, 2010). Therefore, this paper will investigate leadership styles, providing insights into the strategies employed by leaders in response to diverse pressures and organisational needs.

This dissertation seeks to explore how leaders use a model of instructional coaching as a means of supporting teacher development, whilst also improving student outcomes in-line with neo-liberal principles. Neoliberalism has changed the shape of education, in terms of placing greater focus on ideas of marketisation and getting the 'best value' in education. This has led to schools and teachers becoming subject to greater control through the surveillance of pupil progress and examination results, holding schools to account for public money expenditure (Ball, 2008; Kelly, 2013). Therefore, leadership must rise to this challenge and ensure that the organisation is constantly improving, especially due to league tables which are commonly used to determine how successful an organisation is, consequently, having an effect on consumer choice. Due to the nature of instructional coaching, which requires numerous coaches within an organisation, the study will investigate various perspectives on leadership styles employed during the implementation of instructional coaching, encompassing viewpoints of both leaders and those being led.

Improving student outcomes may be seen as a 'wicked problem' (Grint, 2008) for a myriad of reasons: 'student outcomes' encompasses a wide range of factors, including academic achievement, social-emotional development, critical-thinking skills and many more dimensions; the focus of student outcomes on may lead to a narrowing of

content being taught; and the interconnectedness of outcomes with factors which may be outside of the education system e.g., socioeconomic status, family background and educational policies. Therefore, addressing 'wicked' problems requires engagement with diverse stakeholders, considering multiple perspectives and embracing adaptive approaches which acknowledge the complexity of the problem. Due to the complexity of the matter, school reform in recent years has placed an emphasis on the quality of teaching to raise standards. As such, there has been a noticeable rise in the literature of 'instructional leadership' (Neumerski, 2013), with emerging research in this field emphasising that not only do effective leaders place the focus on improving teaching (Edmonds, 1979), but a move away from the principal having sole responsibility. Instead, these roles are frequently distributed across a host of leaders, including teacher leaders and instructional coaches (Spillaine and Diamond, 2007).

This research will be pertinent to the field, given the lack of evidence on instructional coaching implementation in English schools, despite its proven effectiveness in the US (Woulfin and Rigby, 2017). Although my organisation is in its embryonic stages of embedding instructional coaching, this piece of research aims to understand how the system is used to support teachers and their individual needs, whilst also facilitating and focusing on whole-school goals, increasing human capital. In addition to this, this research will investigate leadership styles and actions from varying perspectives, to understand how leaders manage the change towards a system of instructional coaching.

A review of the literature has been undertaken to obtain an understanding of the existing body of research relevant to the initial research question, 'How do leaders implement a system of instructional coaching to meet the professional development needs of teachers?' The review has enabled the identification of key themes. Literature searches were undertaken using the Open University library and Google Scholar search engines to identify relevant peer-reviewed journals and books. The initial search terms used were 'leadership', 'instructional coaching', 'evaluation and accountability in UK schools', 'performance management' and 'distributed leadership'. As my search progressed, the terms 'teacher leader' and 'instructional coach' seemed somewhat interchangeable as these roles entailed different responsibilities in different schools, yet another consequence of limited and emerging research in this field. For

the purpose of my study, I will use the term ‘teacher leader’ (TL) to describe teachers who support leaders with the drive for instructional reform, instead of the term ‘instructional coach’.

My previous research question focused heavily on understanding how instructional coaching could be used for the dual-purpose of support and evaluation of teachers, in particular, evaluation linked to performance management, which in the UK, is a contentious issue due to the introduction of performance-related pay. However, after much research, it became abundantly clear that there is a dearth of research in this field, and instructional coaching itself needs far more clarification as there tends to be vast differences in terms of local implementation. Furthermore, the research which did elaborate on how formal evaluation could be used (Woulfin and Rigby, 2017) identified an increased risk in conflict between the coach and the teacher, diminishing the effectiveness of instructional coaching.

This proposal adopts a case study approach from an ontologically subjectivist and epistemologically interpretivist research paradigm. It aims to explore how leaders implement instructional coaching to align with teachers’ professional learning needs and how it impacts on their teaching. The proposal is situated within a UK-based all-through academy, educating pupils aged 5-18. It aims to examine the differing perceptions of leadership style in the implementation of instructional coaching, from the perspective of leaders and those being led. The study’s goal is to assist leaders in effectively integrating instructional coaching into their professional learning strategy. This research is guided by Bourdieu’s habitus, field and capital framework, offering a lens to explore the complex interplay of human behaviour and power dynamics. By investigating these dynamics, the study aims to offer insights to leaders on how to develop a culture whereby they can leverage instructional coaching to enhance teaching practices and student outcomes.

(1002 words)

Chapter 2 – Literature Review – The Topic

2.1 – Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the key findings, review, and critique the literature related to the topic. To achieve this, an approach summarised by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) was utilised, ensuring that each stage of the process was carefully considered. Appropriate peer-reviewed literature was identified and retrieved, employing key terms as outlined previously. In addition, further literature was identified by following the in-text citations, which helped in developing a greater understanding. The analysis focused on key themes, allowing for the identification of comparisons and commonalities. It is important to note that this process is not limited to single events but rather requires continuous review to uncover new themes. This review was guided by emerging themes and ideas from the literature, with new literature found to provide contrasting or relevant perspectives to the developing theories. An inductive approach supported the development of research questions and will continue to be employed throughout the proposed research, enabling the examination of initial assumptions (Cohen et al, 2017). To determine the quality of each piece of literature, I assessed its reliability, validity and generalisability as suggested by Lillejord and Borte (2020).

In the realm of educational leadership, the landscape of the UK education system is significantly influenced by accountability and performativity imperatives. This context has led to a keen exploration of how leadership strategies intersect with professional learning, ultimately enhancing instructional quality. This literature review delves into the intricate relationship between leadership, accountability, and performativity within the UK education framework, investigating how these dynamics shape the landscape of professional development. Specifically, the review delves into the surging prominence of instructional coaching as a vehicle for elevating educational outcomes, elucidating how this approach aligns with leadership aspirations for instructional improvement, trust emerges as a pivotal facet in this discourse, emphasising its essential role in fostering effective instructional coaching relationships. Through this exploration, the review seeks to unveil the multifaceted interactions between

leadership, accountability, instructional coaching, and trust, contributing to a holistic understanding of leadership's transformational potential in the realm of education.

As a result of the findings in the literature review, this chapter firstly provides an investigation into the accountability context in the UK to explore the factors that influence leaders' decisions around professional learning within schools. Secondly, it outlines how instructional coaching is utilised as a means of delivering professional learning. Thirdly, due to the complex nature of instructional coaching, the paper examines the actions of leadership practices in implementing the programme, recognising the importance of developing trust and culture, whilst also recognising the literature of change theory.

2.2 - Accountability and Performativity

Accountability and performativity have held a prominent place in the UK, in recent years, due to an era of global marketisation in education, where organisations are increasingly subjected to governmental attempts to raise the standard of education (James and Gleeson, 2007). This has led to high-stakes formal observations and target-setting in many settings as a way of leaders regulating performance and this echoes the prominence of hierarchical positioning within leadership in recent years (Ball, 2003). Rigorous research has demonstrated that there is weak correlation between teacher evaluation and measuring teachers' performance based on growth in students' test scores (Donaldson and Firestone, 2021). It is suggested that this may be due to tension between the two major functions of evaluation: holding teachers accountable and supporting teachers in learning to improve their practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 1983).

It is argued that the duality has become dichotomised in recent years as a result of educational policy placing greater emphasis on observation for the purpose of quality assurance (O'Leary, 2020). 'Hierarchical observation', undertaken by senior leaders, is therefore prominent in many schools. It is argued that this is due to observation becoming an important source of evidence of quality assurance for governmental agencies in the UK, such as the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Therefore, there has been a growth in the number of teacher observations which result in

performative judgement, mirroring previous inspections where a one-off observation would judge teacher effectiveness, despite the interplay of complex factors within every classroom.

Therefore, educators continue to find their professional and personal values challenged and displaced within this environment of hyper-regulation and accountability (Ball, 2003). Performance management often centres around pupil data and high-stakes observations, fostering a culture of mistrust (Lingard, 2011). This approach may lead to a skewed perception of daily teaching quality, as teachers tailor lessons to accountability requirements, potentially misrepresenting their true classroom practice.

Furthermore, due to the reliance on senior leaders conducting such observations, it is argued that the energy needed to collect the performativity information necessary for control reduces the energy available for making improvements (Elliot, 1996). Therefore, accountability and support to improve teachers can often be seen as conflicting: leaders must decide on where they choose to direct their resources, especially with regards to professional learning. This aligns with the first research question within the proposal: *How do leaders ensure that instructional coaching is integrated with the broader professional learning programme in the school?*

2.3 - Leveraging Instructional Coaching for Professional Learning

It is important to consider the distinction between *professional learning* and *professional development* for the context of this paper as it is more than semantics. As argued by Fullan (2007), the term *professional development* is 'a major obstacle to progress in teacher learning' (p.35). The term *professional development* may lead one to think of training days and the delivering of information to teachers as opposed to considering whether teachers are learning and making sustained changes which will shift practice. Definitions of professional development have changed in recent years with the rise of professional learning communities and other collaborative practices - both demonstrating a movement towards the concept of continual learning and contexts for teacher change. Fraser et al. (2007) use the term *professional learning* instead to capture the collaborative processes involved and define them as processes

that ‘whether intuitive or deliberate, individual or social, result in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes of beliefs or actions of teachers’ (p.157). Therefore, it is this definition that I subscribe to when the term *professional learning* is used throughout.

Professional learning (PL) for teachers has long been recognised as vital for enhancing classroom practice, school improvement and ameliorating student’s learning outcomes (Borko, 2004). In response to this recognition, The Department for Education (DFE, 2016) published standards for teachers’ PL, aiming to elevate expectations and promote effective professional growth by emphasising collaboration, sustained efforts, and a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes. Therefore, it could be argued that these standards offer a framework, rather than highly prescriptive guidance, allowing schools considerable autonomy in tailoring their PL programmes, placing the onus on leaders to shape the agenda.

Leaders must craft a comprehensive programme of PL which encompasses both individual and professional learning needs, based on performance management and professional standards (Timperley, 2011). Little (2003) delves deeper into the individual needs and specifies that PL should accommodate diverse starting points and should differentiate appropriately, allowing teachers to shape the direction of their own development. This highlights a hugely complex task as it seems that a highly individualised programme is needed which could be labour intensive within a large organisation, placing greater pressures on leaders as they balance their roles. Consequently, one of the research questions aims to explore teachers’ perceptions on the impact of instructional coaching on their professional learning.

However, it is essential to also consider team needs simultaneously (Bubb et al., 2007) as it is suggested that PL tends to yield better results when integrated as a crucial component of broader school improvement efforts, rather than isolated activities disconnected from other school initiatives or changes (Darling-Hammond, 2009). In a recent independent review of the teachers’ PL (Ofsted, 2023), it was found that although schools had prioritised training in schools, many schools had engaged in training and development which prepared them for Ofsted Inspections by focusing on practising for deep dives, an in-depth look at a specific subject area, or support for

preparing curriculum intent statements, both of which do not necessarily improve the quality of education. However, it could be suggested that it is a consequence of a lack of time and pressures placed on leaders to perform well during high-stake inspections. Instead, Schleicher (2012) argues that most effective PL comes from a culture where there is clear alignment and coherence between individual, team and institutional needs. Essential to cultivating a culture of continuous improvement is arguably the empowerment of teachers as active agents in their own personal growth. Yet, this relies on schools developing a culture of development and situating the PD in the context of the organisation to ensure that change occurs (Fullan, 2007). The concept of 'culture' refers to the various ways that groups of people act and the beliefs they connect to their actions (Wolcott, 2008). It is suggested that a positive teacher learning culture thrives when three components - structures, values and relationships - are present and aligned. Therefore, leaders play a vital role in ensuring conducive conditions where teachers collaborate and learn together. Building a strong teacher community is, therefore, paramount in building a culture of continuous improvement; it has been found that schools with strong communities tend to have higher student achievement - a key objective of PL (Bryk et al, 2010).

Leadership stands as a pivotal factor that significantly contributes to the development of a community of learners within educational institutions (Watson, 2014). The influence of leadership extends beyond mere facilitation of PL; it strongly shapes the learning environment and determines whether teachers perceive their learning as cumulative and developmental (Robinson et al., 2009). Several studies highlight the important role of principals in teachers' PL (Cravens et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2016), especially with regards to influencing the shared mission and developing a culture of trust for a productive learning environment (Kaser and Halber, 2009).

Leadership plays a crucial role in managing the diverse needs of individual staff members and the overall school improvement agenda. As planning for PL involves addressing competing needs, leaders must consider the school's improvement plan, requirements of specific school teams, government initiatives, local authority priorities and the individual needs of teachers, which encompass professional, personal and propersonal aspects (Ofsted, 2006). While these multifaceted demands may pose challenges, leaders must strategically allocate resources to evaluate and enhance

teachers' basic teaching competence within a finite budget. There is, however, strong evidence to suggest that investing in PL is one of the highest impact leadership actions (Robinson et al., 2009).

Visionary or transformational leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994) is argued to be essential for inspiring and sustaining teachers' engagement in PL activities. The term 'transformational leadership' aims to bring about change in individuals and systems, creating positive change in followers and developing them into leaders of the future. Within PL, this is powerful as leaders must actively manage dissonance, challenge assumptions and promote action to create continuous learning (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008); the vision must be clear and followers need to be actively engaged in the learning process as the impact of PL must extend beyond surface-level changes (Cordingly et al., 2015). Moreover, accountability plays a crucial role for transformational leaders in reinforcing PL initiatives; it is important for teachers to be treated as professionals for their engagement but part of being treated as a professional is being accountable, through formal and informal processes (Timperley et al., 2007). Despite there being a wealth of literature on professional learning and its implementation in schools and organisations, even if it becomes outdated rapidly due to changing initiatives, there seems to be a scarcity of leadership literature which ties both leadership and studies with professional learning together (Cordingly et al., 2015). Therefore, the research will aim to explore how the perceptions of leaders, and those being led, differ in their understanding of leadership's actions and style within the implementation of instructional coaching.

Instructional Coaching

In response to policy initiatives calling for the implementation of evidence-based classroom practice, instructional improvement in education has gained rapid attention (Gibbons and Cobb, 2017; Kraft et al., 2008) as educators recognise the limitations of formal approaches to PL (Desimone and Pak, 2017). Consequently, educational institutions have invested heavily in instructional coaching as one form of PL to support teachers in their continuous improvement (Neuman and Wright, 2010). Since the 1980s, school reform has focused on instructional leadership, with research expanding the notion of 'instructional leadership' to involve multiple leaders rather than just the

principal (Spillane and Diamond, 2007). This distributed model, which will be explored further, acknowledges that instructional improvement requires collaboration among various leaders, not isolated efforts. However, the discourse on instructional leadership is often fragmented, with separate bodies of literature on the roles of principals, teacher leaders and instructional coaches, neglecting the integrated nature of leadership in instructional improvement (Buchanan et al., 2013)

The conceptualisation of instructional coaching presents challenges due to varying definitions and practices in the field, this is exacerbated by the research being primarily entrenched in the US education system (Neumerski, 2013). There is currently a scarcity of educational literature based on instructional coaching in the UK education system. Some researchers emphasise the non-evaluative and individualised nature of coaching (Taylor, 2008), whereas others view instructional coaches as mentors supporting whole-school reform and building school capacity (Neufield and Roper, 2003; Walpole and Blamey, 2008). The lack of a standardised definition makes it challenging for schools to determine the role and use of instructional coaches, leading to inconsistency in coaching practices. Moreover, research on the impact of coaching on teaching and learning outcomes has yielded mixed results, partly due to the variation in coaching activities and teacher receptivity to change (Neufeld and Roper, 2003; Neuman and Wright, 2010; Taylor, 2008). For instance, some studies found positive effects on instructional practices and achievement (Cornett and Knight, 2009; Bean et al., 2010) whilst others report limited impact (Matsumura et al., 2009; Biancarosa et al., 2010). These discrepancies highlight the need for a more comprehensive understanding of coaching practices and their influence on teaching and learning outcomes (Knight, 2018).

Instructional coaching embodies a departure from traditional top-down approaches to PL, shifting towards a more personalised and context-specific strategy aimed at enhancing teacher practices (Papay and Kraft, 2017). This paradigm shift aligns with coaching literature, where instructional coaching is often characterised by a structured three-stage cycle encompassing pre-conference, lesson observation and post-conference phases (Teemant, 2014). Despite variations in nomenclature across coaching models, these stages share fundamental commonalities in their underlying functions (Knight et al., 2015). The pre-conference phase involves collaborative

interactions between coaches and teachers to establish shared goals and planning strategies, providing a solid foundation for subsequent coaching interactions.

In addition to these structured cycles, features of instructional coaching, as outlined by Papay and Kraft (2017), underscore an individualised, intensive and context specific nature which clearly build on the PL specifications outlined by the DfE (2016). Coaches and teachers engage in regular interactions, typically at least every fortnight, fostering a sustained engagement over an extended period of time. This is a complete paradox to the high-stakes observations which frequently see insufficient time spent on following up and making changes to practise due to restrictions in senior leaders' time. An extended timeframe of engagement allows for an in-depth exploration and refinement of teaching practices, enabling teachers to implement and refine new strategies over time (Papay and Kraft, 2017). Furthermore, instructional coaching operates within the specific context of each school, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities that teachers face with their instructional environments. As a consequence of its individualised and context-specific nature, instructional coaching is inherently focused on addressing the unique needs of each teacher.

Furthermore, instructional coaching can also be viewed as a dynamic approach that possesses the potential to broker both whole-school improvement and meet the individual needs of teachers. This dual capacity arises from its unique blend of personalised support and alignment with broader school improvement goals; it navigates the intricate interplay between the macro and micro dimensions of educational reform. Galey-Horn and Woulfin (2021) argue that coaches take on a political role as they attempt to catalyse reform. It is suggested that coaches negotiate policy messages on what to teach and how to teach it, balancing the power between leadership and teachers (Coburn and Russell, 2008; Hopkins et al., 2017). More explicitly, through regular meetings, coaches are able to interpret, frame, and funnel policy messages for teachers (Woulfin, 2016).

Implementing instructional coaching presents potential problems for leadership as teachers may be resistant to change or may have differing receptivity to coaching support (Zimmerman, 2006). This resistance may be seen as an expression of teachers' professional agency, where they may be reluctant to change their routines,

view past change efforts as unsuccessful, or perceive coaching as a threat to their expertise (Sannino, 2010; Riveros et al., 2012). Additionally power dynamics come into play in the teacher-coach relationship as coaches are expected to be instructional experts compared to teachers (Gibson, 2005) Negotiating these power dynamics, while fostering a supportive coaching environment, is critical for effective coaching practices.

Despite the complexities involved in instructional coaching, it remains a promising approach to support instructional improvement in education (Neuman and Cunningham, 2009). To harness the full potential of instructional coaching, strong leadership that fosters a culture of continuous improvement is crucial.

2.5 - Leadership Styles and Approaches

The implementation of instructional coaching necessitates a nuanced and multifaceted leadership approach, which finds resonance in the concept of distributed leadership (Spillane et al., 2001; Goldstein, 2003). Distributed leadership involves the shared responsibility and collaboration among various stakeholders to collectively shape and influence educational practices (Spillane, 2006). In the context of instructional coaching, distributed leadership becomes imperative due to the numerous dimensions and interconnected elements involved in effective coaching initiatives. As much of the literature on instructional coaching is heavily focused on distributed leadership, it will be crucial, with my research proposal, to explore which leadership styles and approaches are present without making assumptions. Therefore, a focus will be placed on understanding the perceptions of leaders, and those being led, as to which leadership styles and approaches are observed.

A notable concern highlighted in the literature is how evaluation systems are plagued with material capital shortages (Donaldson and Firestone, 2021). In many cases, principals have sole responsibility for providing the feedback to teachers, however, studies assert that many principals lack the general knowledge about teaching practice or content knowledge to fully support teachers, this in turn, can undermine trust (Reinhorn et al., 2017). Consequently, there has been a growing body of literature on distributed leadership, which focuses on the shared process of enhancing the

individual and collective capacity of people to effectively achieve their work. This stands in contrast to the notion of a heroic leader who singularly performs all essential leadership functions (Yukl, 2002). In particular, there has been a significant increase in the number of Teacher Leaders (TLs) or instructional coaches in pre-existing instructional coaching programmes in the US. Spillane et al. (2004) suggested that there is a lack of integrated literature which centres on how various instructional leaders – principals and TLs - enact their leadership roles; this proposal aims to delve into this through exploring differing perceptions.

The timetables of TLs exhibit considerable variation as they are influenced by their positional roles within educational institutions. This diversity extends to TLs who are external to the school setting, a prevalent scenario in the US whereby they are engaged in instructional improvement across a school district. An interesting line of enquiry for future research would be a comparison with how multi-academy trusts in the UK develop the model in the near future. For distributed leadership to work, it is argued that a transformational leader is needed: a leader with clarity of vision (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2001). There needs to be alignment between the organisation's vision from the perspective of the principal and what is enacted in reality. Although delegating responsibility and distributing leadership are recognised as a means of helping to foster social capital across an organisation (Spillane et al, 2009; Lumby, 2013), without clearly agreed purposes, decisions and accountability processes, leadership can become neglectful and destructive at one extreme (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial that leaders recognise this and work closely with those that leadership responsibilities have been given to. Furthermore, it is suggested that TLs do not work in isolation as this may lead to a lack of consistency in observation and feedback. Therefore, observational rubrics and frameworks are suggested as a means of supporting coaches in delivering consistent feedback; this is vital in a large organisation where there is a large number of part-time coaches and potentially a high turn-over of staff. In addition to this, TLs face the challenge of having to decide what to prioritise if they recognise dissonance between individual teacher needs and system-wide instructional mandates (Coburn and Woulfin, 2012), therefore, working together to understand the needs of an organisation is key to prioritising school-wide professional development, alongside the instructional coaching programme. Although coherence is not always entirely attainable, TLs may

be considered as crucial resources that can help bridge the gap between the expectations formed outside the classroom and actual classroom practice (Desimone et al., 2002), however, trust is recognised as a vital component.

One major critique of this structure is the complexity of who is in receipt of the distribution and what the realities look like in terms of performance-management (Robinson, 2001), therefore, within my case study there is a distinctive line between evaluation for formative feedback and evaluation for performance-management which is completed by line-managers. Instead, Comstock and Margolis (2021) suggest that the use of TLs changes the positionality of evaluators and they can work alongside leaders to bring greater support for the purpose of developing human capital. The manner in which leadership is distributed serves as a significant function in the implementation, cultural hold and sustainability of instructional reform (Patterson et al, 2021). Qualitative data will therefore be pivotal in understanding the different perceptions and experiences of teachers to track the consistency and effectiveness of the programme.

2.6 - Establishing Trust

The pivotal role of trust within instructional coaching is widely acknowledged (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), particularly in the symbiotic relationship between the TL and teachers. Therefore, examining leaderships' approaches to the implementation of instructional coaching will investigate how their actions develop trust and how these impacts on teachers' perceptions of the impact on their professional learning. In a distributed leadership context, the necessity of comprehending trust-building mechanisms becomes paramount. Trust, as posited by Day et al. (2011), operates as a dual-directional process, intricately woven into the interactions between individuals or a group. This dynamic emphasises trust as a relational bond, a recurrent theme in the literature as highlighted by Branson et al. (2016). Edwards-Grove and Grootenboer (2021) further explore the notion, contending that trust is deeply embedded within social interactions, mutually understood responsibilities and designation, interaction and relationships formed among key stakeholders in the schools.

An important dimension, often overlooked in the discourse on relational trust, pertains to 'role trust' (Bottery, 2003). This conveys the idea that individuals tend to vest trust in specific roles due to societal norms and values associated to those roles, rather than on the individual actions or relationships. This underscores the necessity for leadership to meticulously delineate roles to the staff, particularly in the case of newly established roles such as TLs, where ambiguity may lead to misconceptions about their responsibilities. Consequently, there may be apprehension that TLs are evaluators linked to performance management, based on prior experiences. In this regard, it becomes imperative for leadership to institute clear communication channels to dispel any misunderstandings surrounding TL roles, fostering an environment conducive to their effective implementation. Within the context of instructional coaching, the exploration of role trust emerges as an interesting and underexplored dimension. The extent to which the role of an instructional coach aligns with elements of role trust, and how leaders can shape and nurture this perception of novel roles, becomes a critical inquiry which may be unearthed through exploring leadership's actions at the beginning of implementation.

Moreover, Seashore Louis (2007) argues that many school teams suffer a dearth of relational trust in their milieu, contending that although it is crucial, it can be rendered elusive despite it being recognised for its capacity to drive sustainable and successful school transformations (Edwards-Groves et al., 2016). Therefore, understanding how instructional leaders navigate and balance these dimensions of trust is of paramount importance, contributing to a comprehensive grasp of the intricate fabric of trust-building within the multifaceted tapestry of distributed instructional leadership.

2.7 - Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review has delved into the landscape of UK educational leadership, highlighting how accountability pressures shape leadership strategies and decisions. Instructional coaching emerged as a potential transformative tool, offering individualised, sustained and context-specific professional learning, with the potential to improve instruction and therefore student outcomes. Furthermore, trust stood out as a cornerstone, both in building effective coaching relationships and within the broader leadership context of implementing change. Throughout this chapter, the

concept of distributed leadership has surfaced repeatedly within the literature. Therefore, it has highlighted the need to examine the specific leadership actions which may enable leadership to leverage instructional coaching as a mechanism for PL, without making assumptions.

(4217 words)

Chapter 3 – Literature Review – The Conceptual Framework

3.1 - Introduction

This review explores the integration of Bourdieu's theoretical framework of *habitus*, *field* and *capital* within the context of investigating how leaders implement instructional coaching to address teachers' professional learning needs. Bourdieu's concepts are pivotal in understanding the social dynamics and relationships inherent in educational changes. While his theories offer profound insights, their diverse interpretations and the challenge of application across academic domains demand caution to be taken. This research, although not deeply entrenched in Bourdieu's theories, employs *habitus*, *field* and *capital* as a lens to probe the landscape of social interactions during educational change, particularly in the implementation of instructional coaching. Change theory is critical to this research proposal as the new system of instructional coaching requires teachers to change their own practice. The synthesis of Bourdieu's insights with the change theories of Kotter (1996) and Fullan (2007) offers a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of educational change and provides strategies for leaders to mitigate resistance.

3.2 - Bourdieu's Theoretical Lens - *Habitus*, *Field* and *Capital*

Bourdieu (1977), a prominent late 20th-century critical anthropologist and sociologist, developed a framework which analysed the intertwined relationship between power dynamics and human behaviour, specifically centred around identity. This lens provides a critical perspective through which to investigate how leaders implement instructional coaching to cater to the professional learning needs of teachers within a mainstream, all-through academy in the UK. Central to Bourdieu's framework is the concept of *habitus*, which asserts that each individual entering a particular field carries their own set of dispositions acquired through early socialisation. These dispositions, which form one's *habitus*, profoundly influence relationships and interactions within that field (Hurtado, 2010). Furthermore, *habitus* can be perceived as a repertoire of resources that individuals possess when navigating specific contexts, thereby shaping

their actions and responses. Additionally, Bourdieu (1977) identifies three distinct forms of capital - economic, cultural and social - that individuals can accumulate and utilise within specific fields; this accumulation is closely tied with the social processes and power dynamics present in the field, as well as the pre-existing *habitus* of the individuals within it. Whilst Bourdieu's concepts are often cited widely in various scholarly articles, their diverse interpretations and the considerable ambiguity surrounding his intended meaning highlights the need for cautious application. It is important to recognise that Bourdieu's work primarily resides within the field of sociology, and therefore, translating his theories across academic domains requires thoughtful consideration. This research, while not deeply embedded in Bourdieu's theories, utilises the ideas of *habitus*, *field* and *capital*, to provide a foundational framework for exploring social dynamics and relationships within the context of educational change, from implementing a programme of instructional coaching.

Bourdieu's concept of fields introduces a multi-dimensional understanding of the social world. These fields are composed of three distinctive dimensions - cultural and symbolic, economic, and social which coexist and interact, shaping the power dynamics and relationships that drive social interactions (Kemmis, 2022). These fields act as dynamic areas where struggles for resources and influence occur, fundamentally influencing the behaviour of the individuals and groups within them (Hurtado, 2010). In the context of instructional coaching and change, these fields represent the intricate web of relationships between teachers, TLs and leaders.

Central to understanding these dynamics is the concept of *habitus* which Bourdieu defines as an evolving set of social dispositions acquired through group socialisation - for example, families or work organisations (Bourdieu, 1977). These dispositions influence individuals' attitudes and beliefs, acting as a lens through which they navigate their field. However, it is crucial to delve deeper into the concept of *habitus* to consider its limitations. Whilst *habitus* provides insights into how individuals respond to change based on their ingrained dispositions, it might not fully account for the complexities of conscious decision-making or the potential for individuals to adopt new practices and habits in response to evolving circumstances (Hurtado, 2010).

Moreover, as leaders aim to implement instructional coaching, it is important to critically assess how their actions might influence teachers' habitus, determining how leaders' behaviours and decisions shape the environment in which instructional coaching takes place, and how leaders, through their actions, actively reshape the habitus of teachers to foster a more receptive attitude towards change. Both of these queries reflect the intricate interplay of power, interactions, and personal dispositions within the educational landscape and link with the research questions exploring how teachers perceive the impact of instructional coaching on their own professional learning and the perceptions of actions taken by leadership in the implementation.

3.3 - Power Dynamics

The power dynamics within these fields also require further consideration. Bourdieu's theory of fields suggests that struggles are intrinsic to social interactions, driven by competition for resources (Hurtado, 2010). In the context of instructional coaching, leaders and TLs hold a certain level of power and authority, but this power is not considered to be unidirectional (Stoetzel and Taylor-Marshall, 2022). Teachers possess agency and influence as well, contributing to the intricate web of interactions. Exploring the power dynamics is vital in shedding light on how leaders can navigate the balance between influencing change and respecting teachers' agency.

Bourdieu's theories find resonance in exploring how educators respond to change initiatives, particularly concerning professional identity. Jacobs et al. (2013) highlight parallels between Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus* and the formation of professional identity within organisational contexts. The alignment between personal beliefs and institutional expectations significantly influences reactions to change, with resistance emerging when new initiatives disrupt established norms (Schilling et al., 2012). It is argued that when managers introduce change gradually it allows individuals time and space to process the change and to become associated with their new professional identity therefore decreasing the likeliness of resistance to change. This is defined, by The Open University (2021), in Bourdieuan terms as an individual's capacity to construct a new *habitus* that is appropriate to the field that has been moderated.

Bourdieu (1977) views power as formed in culture and symbolic gestures, claiming that habitus is linked to the issue of power relations by an individual's capital. Therefore, economic, social and cultural capital are argued to be central to the discussion of power (Bourdieu, 1986). However, in contrast to this, Foucault's (1977) conception of power diverges from conventional models that view power as a top-down imposition, instead Foucault shifts the focus to the mechanisms through which power operates, aiming to regulate society at large. Arguably, within the potentially hyper-regulated and accountable environment of the UK education system, educators often face the challenge of reconciling their professional and personal values, a phenomenon exacerbated by the mechanisms of power manifested through observation (Ball, 2003).

Amidst the discussion of instructional coaching as a supportive mechanism for growth and improvement, Foucault's concept of 'disciplinary power' (1977) warrants attention. This concept illustrates how societal regulations drive individuals to conform. It can be argued that the observations, especially those executed on a more spontaneous basis, without giving notice to the teacher before visiting, within instructional coaching potentially mirrors elements of a 'panopticon', a metaphor portraying constant surveillance that compels individuals to self-monitor and adjust their behaviour. This resemblance to constant observation raises concerns about the impact on the organisational culture and agency. Therefore, as educators engage in adopting new teaching techniques while discarding outdated practices, they must negotiate their agency within a framework seemingly influenced by the mechanisms of discipline and surveillance.

This situates educators within a regulatory system that assesses displays of apparent quality, often witnessed during isolated moments of scrutiny - short one-off observations, as reliable indicators of institutional worth. This system, as outlined by Ball (2003), engenders a culture of 'cynical compliance' and operates within an artifice built around the competitive reality of a market model, based on neoliberal principles. However, this system's efficacy for fostering teacher improvement becomes questionable. Despite its focus on accountability, the structure's inclination towards 'performativity architecture' places educators in an ongoing struggle. They constantly balance their sense of value and purpose, causing an existential dilemma that pits

their autonomy against the performativity that seemingly confines them to producing outputs judged by external standards and agencies.

Foucault's concept of a 'disciplinary technology' arguably captures the essence of such a system, aiming to shape 'docile bodies' for manipulation and control. Therefore, this raises a critical inquiry into the effectiveness of this system for teacher improvement, particularly concerning agency. This critique further aligns with Foucault's concerns about the potential to neutralise the creative agency of teachers, transforming it into a relation of 'strict subjection' (Foucault, 1991). Contestably, educational worth therefore becomes reconfigured in terms of accountability data such as progress metrics or examination results, leading to teachers' power as creative agents becoming marginalised and harming personal agency and freedom.

In contrast to Foucault's emphasis on power dynamics and disciplinary control, using the ideas of Bourdieu in relation to instructional coaching offers a more nuanced perspective. Bourdieu's framework suggests that changing teachers' habits and practices can occur through fostering a supportive environment rather than relying on surveillance. The concept of *habitus* recognises that change is best achieved by teachers in reflective and collaborative processes. Therefore, understanding how teachers perceive the impact instructional coaching has on their professional learning is imperative; it is important to understand whether they value it and see its potential. Furthermore, developing an understanding of the actions that leadership takes to develop a culture of support will be crucial within the research proposal. Moreover, Bourdieu's notion of capital - economic, cultural and social, can be harnessed to create a positive field for change. It is argued that leaders can leverage their capital to cultivate an environment where teachers feel empowered and valued. This comparison prompts educators and leaders to critically evaluate their strategies for instructional coaching, considering how to best promote sustainable and meaningful change.

3.4 - Navigating Change

In the context of addressing teachers' professional learning needs, the synergy between Bourdieu's theoretical framework and change theories, such as those of

Kotter (1996) and Fullan (2007) becomes particularly pertinent. Bourdieu's insights prompt leaders to go beyond the superficial change efforts and delve into teachers' inherent habits, beliefs and values, thus ensuring that coaching aligns with their professional identity. Therefore, the research question which explores teachers' perception on the impact of instructional coaching will be pivotal.

On the other hand, change theories, espoused by Kotter (1996) and Fullan (2007) provide a structured approach for leaders to utilise to initiate and sustain change. Kotter's model, with its steps for creating urgency, building coalitions, and communicating a clear vision can be applied to the scenario of implementing instructional coaching. By fostering a shared sense of urgency and collective commitment to professional growth, leaders lay the foundation for a more receptive environment for coaching. However, as Morrison (2013) acknowledges, time restraints might necessitate decisive action, making the initial top-down approach necessary for change, whilst it requires the entire staff body to sustain and implement the change.

Moreover, Fullan's (2007) emphasis on building capacity aligns with Bourdieu's capital accumulation concept. Leaders, acting as catalysts for change, can invest in teachers' capital. However, Carnall's (2007) coping system outlines the process of individual and group adjustment to change, recognising the need for individuals to process their emotions. It is important for leaders, but perhaps more importantly for TLs, to recognise these emotions and understand the complexities of these emotions within coaching sessions, to minimise resistance and to work collaboratively with teachers in embracing the change to fully participate and engage with the coaching process.

It is argued that the principal, a pivotal figure in the process, must embody the transformative leadership required to navigate the complex dynamics of change (Leithwood et al, 1984; Simsek, 2013). Embracing the principles of change theories, the principal can unite educators with the shared vision of enhancing instructional practices echoing both Kotter's (1996) emphasis on vision and Fuller's (2007) focus on collective commitment. Simultaneously, TLs may bridge the gap between administrative leadership and classroom realities, reflecting the essence of Bourdieu's habitus.

3.5 - Methodology

I will be applying the theoretical framework of *habitus*, *capital*, and *field* to the proposed research. This study will delve into the social dynamics and relationships that emerge during the process of educational change when implementing instructional coaching and through the process of coaching which requires teachers to make changes to their own practice. The research aims to uncover the strategies employed by educational leaders to establish a culture in which instructional coaching is embraced as a constructive mechanism for professional development.

With a focus on the dynamics of leadership within the realm of instructional coaching, the study will probe into leadership's actions to identify which approaches emerge and whether they align to current research which focuses heavily on distributed leadership. Recognising that instructional enhancement, as acknowledged in the literature (Woulfin and Rigby, 2017), necessitates collaborative efforts among leaders.

Embedded within an ontologically subjectivist framework (Cohen and Manion, 1994), the research acknowledges the central significance of participants' interpretations and experiences regarding instructional coaching. This perspective draws attention to the potential existence of multiple valid realities or interpretations of the same phenomenon. Through this lens, the study endeavours to unravel the diverse constructions of instructional coaching held by individuals across the academy, shaped by their distinct experiences, roles and contexts. The research will aim to highlight the role that leaders play in shaping the context within which coaching operates, illuminating the interplay between leadership styles, the broader educational environment and identifying whether teachers believe that it meets their own professional learning needs.

Augmented by an epistemologically interpretivist approach, the research seeks insight into the participants' motivations, experiences and perceptions. The interpretative nature of the research accentuates the importance of recognising that human behaviour and experiences are complex and dynamic, therefore, the proposal anticipates an exploration of the multifaceted interactions and relationships inherent within the context of instructional coaching. By following this line of enquiry, it may be

possible to explore how teachers interpret their experiences of coaching and evaluation as there is evidently a seemingly fine line between the two (Galey-Horn and Woulfin, 2021).

Therefore, aligning with an ontologically subjectivist and epistemologically interpretivist research paradigm as articulated by Cohen and Manion (2017), the study is poised to delve into the subjective interpretations of leaders, TLs and teachers. This research intends to elucidate the participants' perspectives regarding the leadership's role in cultivating a culture that embraces instructional coaching as a facilitator of professional development rather than for the purpose of evaluation, while simultaneously assessing the degree of alignment that exists between leadership and the teaching community.

The proposed research methodology is qualitative as it aligns with the research paradigm chosen. As Creswell (2014) argues, qualitative methods provide an avenue for delving into the complexity of human experiences and the meanings attributed to them. In this context, qualitative methods, underpinned by the work of Bourdieu and change theory will allow the voice of the teachers, TLs and leaders to be heard and their perceptions of reality to be investigated. A qualitative approach is essential for exploring social dynamics and relationships (Buchanan et al., 2013). This approach goes beyond merely quantifying outcomes; quantitative methods are argued to be reductive within an education environment and may detach the researcher from the subjects (Savela, 2018). However, it is important to understand that quantitative approaches may be generally more reliable due to less ambiguity in interpreting the available data (Cohen et al., 2017). Therefore, analysis of the data collected must be carefully considered, this will be explored further in Chapter 5.

In conducting my research proposal, I position myself as an 'insider' researcher, a stance bearing both advantages and critical considerations. This approach offers the advantage of having a rich understanding of my context and the issues and areas that need exploring (Brannick and Coghlan 2007). However, due to my position as an instructional coach, I must recognise that there are substantial challenges to overcome with regards to 'researcher bias' as my personal values and experiences may shape the inquiry's direction, design, data collection and analysis (Chavez, 2008). To

counteract this potential bias, a meticulous commitment to minimise this must be upheld at each phase of the research process.

3.6 – Conclusion

This chapter has critically evaluated the literature regarding the integration of Bourdieu's theoretical framework, centred around habitus, field and capital, in the context of examining leadership dynamics, instructional coaching and educational change. It has highlighted the potential insights these concepts offer in understanding the complex interplay of influences within these domains. Establishing a research paradigm which combines an ontologically subjectivist and epistemologically interpretivist approach, aligns with the principles of understanding subjective interpretations and exploring complex human experiences. This paradigm invites the diverse perspectives of leaders, TLs and teachers within the implementation of instructional coaching within an organisation.

The following chapters will investigate the research design, interrogating how it has been shaped by the existing literature within the field, the conceptual framework as outlined within this chapter, and my paradigmatic position. The exploration will encompass how these factors amalgamate to guide the research methodology and analysis, in the endeavour of developing a comprehensive understanding of how leaders implement a system of instructional coaching in the context of an all-through academy in the UK.

(2849 words)

Chapter 4 – The Research Proposal

The research proposal is entitled: ‘A case study: investigating how leaders implement a system of instructional coaching to meet the professional learning needs of teachers in a mainstream, all-through academy in the UK.’ This research will be pertinent to the field of educational research as there is a distinctive lack of evidence on the implementation of instructional coaching in English schools, despite an emerging body of research in the US (Woulfin and Rigby, 2017).

The proposed research aims to understand how leaders integrate instructional coaching within the broader professional learning framework, understand teachers’ perceptions of the coaching’s impact, and the perceptions of leadership style within the implementation, both from the perspective of leaders and those being led. The study, therefore, aims to provide valuable guidance for leaders in maximising the impact of coaching on teacher growth and school improvement.

The dissertation topic was first generated during the second stage of study, where I was studying the implementation of change; this coincided with my organisation embedding instructional coaching into the architecture of its professional learning offer. The leadership literature, which was underpinned by change theory, offered a helpful lens to examine the changes which were taking place and the initial resistance upon launching the initiative. Early on in the process, I recognised that I was in a unique position as a researcher as my organisation would provide insights into instructional coaching programmes for both the primary and secondary education sectors in the UK. Therefore, adopting a case study as the methodological approach will enable a detailed investigation of the topic (Hartley, 2004).

My initial research question focused heavily on understanding how instructional coaching could be used for the dual-purpose of support and evaluation of teachers, in particular, evaluation linked to performance management to performance management (Tray, 2023). This focus was selected due to the landscape of performance-related pay in the UK which had manifested high-stakes observations in many schools. However, after vast amounts of research, it became abundantly clear

that there is a dearth of research in this field and instructional coaching itself needs further clarification due to differences in terms of local implementation. In addition to this, various literature warned against using instructional coaching as a mechanism for evaluation for the purpose of accountability (Woulfin and Rigby, 2017; Comstock and Margolis, 2021; Woulfin and Rigby, 2021).

Finally, following reflection on the feedback from E822 TMA02, it was decided that a further line of enquiry, which came from distributed leadership frequently within the literature, was to develop an understanding of the leadership approaches that were present within my context from differing perspectives. I identified the need for differing perspectives between the leaders and those being led as the dual approach could provide a comprehensive understanding of the leadership dynamics at play. Leaders' insights offer a top-down viewpoint, shedding light on their intentions, strategies and decision-making processes. Whereas, the perspectives of those being led offer a bottom-up vantage point, revealing how leadership actions manifest in day-to-day interactions and experiences.

My final research questions are:

- ❖ *How do leaders ensure that instructional coaching is effectively integrated within the broader professional learning program of the school?*
- ❖ *How do teachers perceive the impact of instructional coaching on their professional learning experiences and growth?*
- ❖ *What are the perceptions of leadership style in the implementation of instructional coaching, both from the perspective of leaders and those being led?*

(560 words)

Chapter 5 – Research Design, Research Methods and Methods of Analysis

5.1 – Introduction

This chapter will outline and justify the proposed research design which is informed by the topic literature, conceptual framework and paradigmatic position. Throughout this chapter, I will outline my proposed research methods, the study's participants, methods of analysis and the ethical considerations for each stage of the research process.

5.2 - Research Approach

The research that I am proposing will take the form of a descriptive case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin 2002) in order to gather an in-depth understanding of a complex issue in its real-context. The study aims to gain insight and understanding into the lived experiences of teachers and leaders during the implementation of instructional coaching, to identify to what extent a teacher's professional learning needs are met. It is suggested that the case study approach, which reveals the deep complexity of educational setting, provides a powerful alternative to decontextualised, quantitative research models which have gained popularity following neoliberal reform (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2014).

Case studies are ideally suited for understanding everyday practices (Hartley, 2004) and offer potential for future comparative studies. Although subject to criticisms, such as their lack of generalisability due to the case being contextually and temporarily bound and their relatively small sample sizes (Harry and Lipsky, 2014). Despite this, others disagree (Darlington and Scott, 2003) arguing that despite smaller sample sizes, prolonged engagement and more in-depth analysis makes the sample appear larger and therefore validates the study. Furthermore, there is debate regarding what constitutes a 'case' within research (Cohen et al., 2017). Robson (2002) and Punch (2005) counteract this by determining that a case could be ranging from one person to an entire organisation; the only caveat is that the case must not become too large

that it is not possible to produce in-depth insights. For the purpose of this research proposal, the case being analysed is an all-through academy in the UK, educating pupils from five to eighteen years of age.

Given the scarcity of research in the UK context concerning instructional coaching, a case study approach enables a detailed and holistic investigation which accounts for the local intricacies and culture of the specific context. However, whilst they provide rich and in-depth insights into specific phenomena, it is argued that they may not comprehensively cover all aspects of a complex issue (Merriam, 1998). For example, some elements may become overlooked or underexplored. Therefore, it is important to recognise that in the context of this research, certain factors that influence instructional coaching implementation might not be adequately addressed due to the limited scope of the case study.

5.3 - Research Methods and Instruments

For the research proposal, I intend to deploy two research instruments: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Fielding (2012) highlights the importance of utilising multiple research instruments as they enhance the credibility of data analysis and interpretation through corroboration. This study recognised that adopting such an approach offers a more comprehensive exploration of the research question, aligning with Baxter and Jack's (2008) notion of understanding phenomena from various perspectives to identify multiple facets instead of using a singular lens. The decision to limit the proposal to the use of two instruments stems from practical considerations, including time restraints, budget and available resources. These instruments are selected to effectively capture the qualitative data required for the study, acknowledging the challenges inherent in generating reliable data within the research context (Briggs et al., 2012). In the subsequent sections, I will delve deeper into the specifics of each instrument, outlining their methodologies and contributions to addressing the research questions.

Research Instrument 1: Semi-Structured Interviews

In designing my research proposal, I have chosen to employ semi-structured interviews, a qualitative method known for its flexibility and depth in capturing participants' perspectives (Mertens, 2007). This approach aligns with the research's focus on understanding leadership approaches in the implementation of instructional coaching. The primary advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews lies in their ability to foster reciprocity between the interviewer and participants (Galleta, 2013), allowing for improvisation of follow-up questions based on participants' responses, contributing to a more in-depth exploration of the topic (Hardon et al., 2004). As an insider in this research area, I am able to leverage my previous knowledge to craft pertinent interview questions, adding to the method's effectiveness (Kelly, 2010). The research questions guiding these interviews can be found in Appendix 2, by creating some predetermined and open-ended questions for the interview, a level of standardisation is created (Fielding, 2012) and may alleviate and mitigate a level of observer bias.

Semi-structured interviews offer numerous advantages as they facilitate a rapid comprehension of a phenomenon (Coleman, 2012) and encourage participants to express their authentic selves, delving into their inner thoughts and experiences (Roulstone, 2010), clearly aligning with the ontological subjectivist and epistemologically interpretivist research paradigm outlined previously. Through semi-structured interviews, I aim to gather insights from key stakeholders, including the principal, TLs and teachers, regarding the leadership approaches taken during the instructional coaching implementation. This method will provide insights into their perceptions of the implemented actions and their efficacy in fostering an accepting culture for the change. Furthermore, the semi-structured format allows for personalisation (Tuckman, 1972) and allows the interviewer to prompt in order to clarify meaning if the interviewee seems to have misunderstood the question; or whether the interviewer wished for them to expand or elaborate upon their response. Patton (1980) suggests that in-depth answers are a hallmark of successful interviewing. However, the caveat to this approach is that the interviewer must be careful not to lead the interviewee or narrow the topic too much as this may show bias

towards leadership structures and affect the data collected (Burton and Bartlett, 2005).

As outlined in the draft research questions, a tailored approach is taken based on the interviewee's roles, fostering a comprehensive exploration of perspectives. Firstly, it prompts leaders to reflect on their strategies for enacting the instructional coaching program and orchestrating change. Secondly, this approach prompts TLs to contemplate how their actions cater to teacher's professional learning needs and to assess the alignment of their experiences and viewpoints with leadership efforts. Furthermore, these custom-tailored questions afford teachers an opportunity to articulate their individual perspectives on instructional coaching, therefore, elucidating whether the program effectively caters to their individual professional learning needs.

One of the potential drawbacks associated with semi-structured interviews is the potential time-consuming nature of the process. As interviews allow participants to elaborate on their responses, the duration of the interview may exceed the anticipated duration (Bloor et al, 2001). As a result, conducting a sufficient number of interviews to gather comprehensive data may require a significant amount of time and resources. Therefore, I considered employing focus groups as a research method. However, given the sensitive nature of the information related to leadership practices, the potential challenge to guaranteed participants' anonymity led me to opt for semi-structured interviews.

Research Instrument 2: Questionnaires

Utilising questionnaires as a research instrument offers a systematic approach to collecting data, allowing researchers to explore a range of topics in a standardised manner. Walford (2007) emphasises that while interviews are valuable, they might not suffice on their own to comprehensively understand a complex issue, as participant's knowledge and perceptions can evolve over time. Therefore, by combining interviews and questionnaires in a mixed methods approach, as suggested by Bryman (2006), it can enhance the research by promoting anonymity, which often leads to more candid responses in questionnaires compared to interviews. Additionally, Bryman (2006) suggests that interviews can be used to inform questionnaires, especially within the

question design and this approach will be adopted. Therefore, this is an area that will need further development as the research is carried out.

Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that interviews can be time-intensive, making questionnaires an effective alternative, particularly for collecting perceptions of instructional coaching from a teacher's perspective. Due to the nature of the research proposal, I believe that it is essential to gather information from a number of teachers as the experience of the teacher may heavily influence their perception of instructional coaching as more experienced teachers may have witnessed and undertaken different forms of professional learning in their careers; whereas more novice teachers, especially those that are new to the profession, may have very little to compare to. In addition to this, teachers in different phases, for example, the primary or secondary phase, may also have different experiences. Therefore, there are many dimensions to explore within this context and questionnaires may allow for greater exploration.

The questionnaire will be presented in the form of an online survey presented using Microsoft Forms. The choice of this platform aligns with the familiarity of participants within the organisation, as this is used regularly by all members of staff, ensuring that the platform does not act as a deterrent to participation. By conducting a survey online, there are several advantages, including cost-effectiveness and speed (Cohen et al., 2017). However, researchers must be mindful of potential pitfalls, such as coverage bias and potential survey fatigue due to an overwhelming number of digital surveys. Considering the entire process of administering a survey, from advance communication to follow-up reminders, is vital to encourage participant engagement (Dillman, 2000). Furthermore, due to the context of the research, the researcher will endeavour to choose appropriate times for the questionnaires to be sent out, avoiding pressure points within the term where data and other events within the organisation take place to encourage participation.

In constructing the questionnaire, both open and closed-ended questions will be employed. Closed-ended questions will allow for easier data analysis and five-point scales will be used for participants to express their agreement or disagreement. There is some debate regarding the use of a five-point or seven-point scale (Joshi et al., 2015), however it is recognised that more than 6-points rarely aid understanding.

Furthermore, caution is needed when questions offer pre-coded options as a participant's response might differ if they were to use their own words, however, it is recognised that pre-coded options may offer efficiency (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). Therefore, to foster more comprehensive insights, a balance between pre-coded and open-ended questions will be maintained, accommodating both concise and elaborate responses.

5.4 - Research Participants

For the research proposal, the participants will be chosen through purposive sampling, a deliberate strategy to select individuals who possess the capacity and willingness to engage effectively in the research process (Oliver, 2006). Whilst it would be ideal to interview all members of staff, this would produce overwhelming amounts of data to transcribe and analyse. Anderson and Herr (2009) emphasise the importance of research manageability. Therefore, a sample of the school principal, two TLs and four teachers will be selected for interview, ensuring that there is a balance of teachers from across the Academy. Moreover, to bolster the robustness of the data, I will endeavour to send the questionnaire to a total of twenty teachers within the Academy who have a coach, ten from the primary phase and ten from the secondary phase to capture a broader array of participants.

Group interviews could have potentially alleviated the time pressures while enhancing the sample size; however, concerns about dominant voices overpowering the discussions and thus affecting data reliability necessitated caution (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). Furthermore, the context of organisational dynamics and power dynamics cannot be ignored when conducting research, especially within one's own school environment (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009; Briggs et al., 2012). Given these complexities, a reflexive approach will be adopted throughout the research process, acknowledging and addressing potential sources of bias at each stage (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Due to the researcher's positionality, the inherent power imbalance between the researcher and participants could be particularly salient. In line with a case study approach, ethical justifications for participant selection and management of potential biases are an imperative aspect of the research design (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

Moreover, the decision to conduct the interviews personally is driven by the need for prompt interventions during data collection. An alternative consideration could be to involve an external interviewer, yet this might compromise the depth of contextual understanding required for insightful questioning. Additionally, considering the potential impact of location and timing on participant responses is vital (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). Therefore, participants should be provided with a selection of dates and times in advance of interviews to ensure that the process is convenient for the participant. Furthermore, providing participants with the questions before the interview may also increase the depth of response as they have additional time to consider their thoughts on the matter being explored.

5.5 - Ethics

Ethical considerations are the cornerstone of every research proposal and this study is firmly rooted in the principles outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Given the inherent ethical implications when delving into an individual's own experiences, Oates (2019) emphasises the researcher's duty to navigate these sensitives with the utmost care. To improve ethical awareness, the Open University highlights the importance of researchers embarking on any study while adhering to ethical compliance, as evidenced by their 'Becoming an Ethical Researcher' course which is a prerequisite for any research proposal. Therefore, this research is underpinned by a comprehensive understanding of ethics and the Open University's ethical appraisal form (Appendix 1) has been completed.

The bedrock of ethical consent resides in the foundational stage of obtaining consent from participants. Therefore, prior to initiating the research, the necessary approvals from gatekeeper will be sought, demonstrating respect and sensitivity to the context. Furthermore, all participants will receive comprehensive ethical consent forms, providing them with in-depth information about the research's aims, procedures and their right to withdraw at any point without experiencing any adverse consequences to their professional relationships (Gallagher, 2009). Therefore, interviews must not take place until all participants have willingly signed consent forms. To enhance ethical considerations, participants will receive clear reminders of their option to withdraw both

at the beginning of interviews and in a concise and clear statement at the start of questionnaires. This proactive approach ensures a commitment to maintaining ethical standards at all stages of the research.

Throughout the study, the principle of anonymity will be upheld diligently. In the transcripts from the interviews, pseudonyms such as 'Participant A' and 'Participant B' will be employed as a means of labelling participants to protect their identities, whilst also distinguishing them from one another. It is recognised that protecting participants' anonymity and anonymising data can be challenging, especially as the data is rich and descriptive. Therefore, it is essential that the researcher is transparent from the outset about the risks to ensure that all participants make an informed decision. Additionally, transcribed interviews will be shared with participants to increase the study's credibility; this allows them to review and provide insights on the researcher's interpretations - a step that holds promise for mitigating any potential biases that may arise (Norris, 2007).

Ethical research practices extend beyond the participant interactions to encompass the safekeeping and management of sensitive data. As part of this commitment, meticulous protocols will be in place for the secure storage and eventual deletion of data. As recording interviews ensures the accuracy and completeness of data capture (Fontana and Frey, 2000), minimising the risk of misinterpretation or bias that may occur during note-taking. Care will need to be taken to ensure that they are securely stored on a designated private drive which is password protected to ensure privacy and security. Once the transcription process is completed, the original audio files will be deleted from the secure storage. Alongside this, the researcher will adhere to the GDPR and Data Protection Act when safeguarding the data collected from the study.

5.6 - Methods of Analysis

Drawing on the foundation that participants' viewpoints are valid and contextually shaped, the proposed qualitative data analysis strives to authentically translate their experiences. This endeavour is guided by the recognition that qualitative data is not a straightforward process but one that demands careful organisation, understanding and interpretation. By adhering to a thematic analysis approach, as recommended by

Braun and Clarke (2006), the aim is to unearth patterns and themes embedding within the data.

Furthermore, the proposal acknowledges the potential influence of the researcher's own perspectives during the analysis phase. To mitigate this, the incorporation of sharing the transcripts with participants and developing a further questionnaire supported by the findings within the interviews, will aim to enhance the trustworthiness of the study's findings (Marvasti and Freie, 2017). The data will guide the interpretations, allowing means and relationships to be found through an inductive approach. However, as argued by Firmin (2008), interpretations always begin with the research's assumptions and worldview and therefore, the findings cannot be considerably entirely neutral.

5.7 – Conclusion

In summary, this chapter outlined the research design underpinned by the topic literature, conceptual framework and paradigmatic stance. The chosen research approach was a descriptive case study to allow for an in-depth exploration of how leaders implement a system of instructional coaching. Therefore, to gain rich, qualitative data, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were chosen for data collection within the proposal. Ethical considerations were outlined to explain the reasoning behind research design. It is recognised that as this is a proposal, further issues may arise during the process of conducting the research. However, a continually reflective approach will support the research.

(2865 words)

Chapter 6 – EP Narrative Critical Reflection

The reflection grid (Appendix 3) details the key points of reflection with regards to completing my dissertation. Within the postscript analysis, I have outlined dilemmas in relation to selecting a research topic, navigating my role as an insider researcher, and managing my time and workload throughout the dissertation process.

From the outset of the dissertation module, I knew that I wanted to explore leaders' actions during organisational change. This was particularly pertinent as I had witnessed many changes due to a restructuring and change in leadership within my organisation; I, therefore, wanted to develop a comprehensive understanding of the reasoning behind some of the decisions being made. My own role as an instructional coach in this context led me to delve into the implementation of instructional coaching in UK schools. The trend's burgeoning influence in local educational spheres added resonance to this pursuit. As I probed further, I noticed an interesting debate develop, centred on the dual role of instructional coaching in evaluation and support. Whilst I was initially captivated by this discussion, considering how this could be beneficial for leaders in terms of reducing their time spent on observing for evaluative purposes when instructional coaches were already observing frequently, my perspective shifted after E822 TMA01. Subsequent exploration revealed an array of critiques casting shadows upon the use of instructional coaching for teacher evaluation, unveiling its potential to disrupt power dynamics adversely. I realised that I had specialised too quickly and did not acknowledge the scarcity of literature within the implementation of instructional coaching in the UK's primary and secondary education landscape, and so, my dissertation was shaped by this acknowledgement.

My status as an insider researcher held both promise and ethical complexity. Electing the EP research pathway was intended to safeguard my coaching relationships and uphold the integrity of my research endeavour. Navigating this trajectory necessitated a delicate interplay between leveraging my internal perspectives and understanding of the context to inform my inquiry, whilst remaining vigilant regarding ethical considerations and potential pitfalls, especially with regards to potential power imbalances and researcher bias.

One of the most challenging aspects of writing my dissertation was managing my time and workload, this was a goal that I set myself within my Personal Development Plan (PDP) at the beginning of the module. Alongside studying, I have worked as a full-time teacher, in a role where I have been steering many changes within other areas of the organisation and this has meant that I have needed to focus on my time management. Evolving from my Stage 2 EMA, I refined my approach and meticulously planned each section of each chapter with small, achievable deadlines. By adopting this strategy, I have allowed time for breaks to ensure that I am well rested for my return to work, whilst also meeting the deadline for my dissertation. Effective time management is of paramount importance for educational leaders as it enables them to efficiently balance their multifaceted responsibilities, and so, I believe that this process of studying for my Masters has supported me in honing this skill for the future.

(512 words)

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Appendix 1 - E822 Ethical Appraisal Form

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth



NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking 'in-person' data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your participants.

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research.

For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all "no" you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details

a.	Student name	Louise Tray	
b.	PI		
c.	Project title	A case study: investigating how leaders implement a system of instructional coaching to meet the professional learning needs of teachers in a mainstream, all-through academy in the UK.	
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Mr Robert Melville	
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education	Yes
		Masters in Childhood and Youth	N/A

f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	Leadership and Management
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	September 2023
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	June 2024
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.</i>	UK

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a ‘gatekeeper’ (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	X	
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a ‘police check’ or appropriate level of ‘disclosure’ before carrying out your research? ¹	X	
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. ²	X	
4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in nonpublic places)? If so have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? ³		X

¹ You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure (‘police check’) can be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

² This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

³ Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? ⁴		X
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	X	
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	X	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?		X
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	X	
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?		X
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		X

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/>).

⁴ Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.

Appendix 2 – Draft Interview Question Prompts

Research Questions:

RQ1) How do leaders ensure that instructional coaching is integrated within the broader professional learning needs of teachers in a mainstream, all-through academy in the UK.

RQ2) How do teachers perceive the impact of instructional coaching on their professional learning?

RQ3) What are the perceptions of leadership style in the implementation of instructional coaching, both from the perspective of leaders and those being led?

Warm-up question: What is your role at the Academy?

For Leaders:	Link to Research Questions
1. Can you describe the goals and objectives you aimed to achieve by implementing instructional coaching within the school's professional learning framework?	RQ1
2. How do you ensure that instructional coaching is effectively integrated within the broader professional learning programme and aligned with the school's goals?	RQ1/RQ3
3. What insights have you gained from teachers regarding the impact of instructional coaching on their professional learning? How does this inform your leadership decisions?	RQ2/RQ3
4. Could you provide specific examples of how you collaborate with teacher and teacher leaders to design and implement effective coaching sessions?	RQ1/RQ3
5. Could you elaborate on the leadership style or strategies that you believe contribute to the successful implementation of instructional coaching?	RQ3
6. What strategies do you employ to foster a culture that values instructional coaching as a means of enhancing teacher professional learning?	RQ3
7. Can you share any challenges or obstacles you have encountered while implementing instructional coaching, and how have you addressed or overcome them?	RQ1/RQ2/RQ3

For Teacher Leaders (Instructional Coaches):	Link to Research Questions
1. How do you perceive your role as a teacher leader (instructional coach) in the context of instructional coaching within the school?	RQ3
2. What strategies do you use to build trust and establish collaborative relationships with teachers you work with during coaching sessions?	RQ3
3. What insights have you gained from teachers regarding the impact of instructional coaching on their professional learning? How does this inform your leadership decisions?	RQ2
4. Can you describe an instance where you successfully aligned instructional coaching with a teachers' professional learning goals and needs?	RQ1/RQ2
5. How do you balance between implementing coaching strategies that align with the broader professional learning programme and tailoring them to individual teacher requirements?	RQ1/RQ2/RQ3
6. How do you observe or measure changes in teachers' practice or attitudes resulting from instructional coaching? Can you provide specific examples?	RQ2
7. Could you elaborate on the leadership style or strategies that you believe contribute to the successful implementation of instructional coaching?	RQ3

For Teachers	Link to Research Questions
1. Can you share your perceptions of instructional coaching and how it contributes to your professional learning and growth?	RQ2
2. How do you find instructional coaching sessions impacting your teaching practices and interactions with students?	RQ2

3. Can you provide an example of a coaching session that you found particularly valuable, and how do you think it aligns with your professional learning needs?	RQ2
4. What elements of instructional coaching do you find most effective in fostering positive changes in your teaching approach?	RQ2
5. How do you perceive the alignment between instructional coaching and the broader professional learning initiatives of the school?	RQ1
6. Are there any challenges that you have encountered in participating in instructional coaching and how do you think they should be addressed?	RQ1/RQ2/RQ3
7. Could you share your perceptions of the leadership approaches that have been taken in the implementation of instructional coaching? How do you feel these approaches have influenced the effectiveness of instructional coaching in meeting your professional learning needs?	RQ2/RQ3

Appendix 3 – EMA Reflection Evidence Grid

Category	Feedback received, targets achieved and areas of development to work on.	How did this shape my dissertation?
<p>Knowledge and understanding: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to knowledge of current debate and issues in your specific area of focus; drawing out concepts and themes; choosing a focus area for your dissertation; identifying and overcoming ethical issues.</p>	<p>Developing my research questions was particularly challenging and took</p> <p>Feedback from TMA02:</p> <p>‘Ensure you are clear about the research questions to support you in developing the research design regarding the nature of the leadership exercised within the organisation.’</p> <p>PDP Target: I completed the ‘becoming an ethical researcher’ badge.</p>	<p>During the process of shaping my dissertation, I refined the research questions which had previously assumed the leadership approach that would be evident in the implementation. These were adapted further after feedback from a draft EMA chapter.</p> <p>This supported my understanding of ethics and how it permeated every stage of the research process, especially with regards to the research methods and analysis of data. An area that was particularly challenging as I knew that I would not be carrying out the research in my context.</p>
<p>Critical analysis and evaluation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to justifying or challenging your personal perspective; interpreting and critically analysing evidence and methodologies from your own and others’ research; analysing and evaluating themes and issues; sourcing and critically reviewing a wide range of publications; creating an academic argument using synthesis; comparing and</p>	<p>Feedback from one of my EMA draft chapters stated that I had not placed sufficient emphasis on the research questions.</p> <p>PDP Target: To source relevant literature in relation to my study.</p>	<p>Therefore, I adapted and edited the chapter, referring back to the research questions when summarising key insights gained from the literature to show where the connections were.</p> <p>Due to the nature of the research, I had to broaden my search at times to include different terminology when I discovered new phrases, for example, my search for leaders extended to <i>instructional leaders, instructional coaches and teacher leaders</i>. Within my dissertation, I clarified which terminology would be used. In addition to this, due to there</p>

<p>connecting practice and theory.</p>		<p>being a scarcity of research in this field, I had to widen my search to include literature over a longer period of time. I made sure to be cautious of this factor and read the papers meticulously to check its relevance to the study.</p>
<p>Links to professional practice: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to: designing and/or applying research methods; developing ideas from previous research and frameworks; reflecting and making adaptations during the research and writing process; addressing problems in research design; identifying implications for practice and professional debate; challenging your own assumptions; managing workload and personal motivation.</p>	<p>During the process of planning my dissertation, I had some difficulty in considering how the proposal would take place.</p> <p>Feedback from TMA02: ‘You need to demonstrate further how you could realise your research proposal in practice.</p> <p>I struggled as I had made the decision to do an EP due to being an ‘insider’ researcher and heavily involved in coaching within my organisation.</p> <p>PDP Target: To consider how this research would impact on my career and professional practice.</p>	<p>I read the module material to develop my understanding of research approaches that I could take. In particular, I considered the sample size and knew that I would need more data from teachers’ perspectives on how they viewed the impact on their professional learning as there were many factors.</p> <p>I believe that the knowledge around change leadership and trust that I have gained will be critical within my role within the organisation and beyond. It has helped me to understand how resistance to change can be normal and how leaders can minimise this and support all members of staff.</p>
<p>Structure, communication and presentation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to using academic style and referencing; presenting, managing and sharing information in different modes; communicating</p>	<p>Feedback from TMA02 and EMA draft: ‘Make sure that there are smooth transitions between different sections and ideas.’</p>	<p>I began to use transitional phrases to help the reader move from one section to another. Additionally, I created a chapter plan which supported the cohesion of my writing and word count. However, I did fluctuate from this at times when my ideas developed throughout the chapter. In editing my EP, I</p>

<p>concepts, findings and ideas for different audiences.</p>		<p>needed to heavily proof-read and edit each section to ensure that the ideas from each chapter were cohesive and built on from one another.</p>
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