



PDS Partner Perceptions of Cognitive Coaching

Executive Summary

Overview

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences and perceptions of Professional Development System (PDS) partners in implementing the Cognitive Coaching Model of Learner-Centered Supervision during the internship semester of our teacher education programs. Additional goals included gaining feedback regarding implications for current practice and identifying future opportunities for support.

Costa and Garmston's (1985, 1994) Cognitive Coaching Model uses a three-phase cycle of learner-centered supervision: preconference, observation, and post conference. Unlike traditional models of supervision and evaluation which may include the same processes, Cognitive Coaching aims to help teachers improve instructional effectiveness by becoming more reflective about teaching. The teacher, rather than the "coach," directs the conversation by evaluating the success of the lesson. While Cognitive Coaching is deeply rooted in the clinical supervision theories of Goldhammer (1969) and Cogan (1973), Cognitive Coaching adds to supervision a focus on enhancing teachers' intellectual growth, nurturing teachers' ability to make changes in their own thought processes and instruction, with the ultimate goal of teacher autonomy (Garmston, Linder & Whitaker, 1993).

The historical record of the WCE PDS shows us that, early on, the Cognitive Coaching Model was adopted by all teacher education programs and that all program faculty, university supervisors, and school partners participated in ongoing professional development to enhance their understanding and implementation of the model. Since then, various tools, formative assessments, and opportunities for professional growth have been added to better support and enhance the coaching conversations taking place during the internship semester. To our knowledge, there has been no recent study to determine whether the model is implemented with fidelity at any level, and/or whether the current design and expectations of the model continue to meet the needs of our programs and PDS partners.

Research questions for this study include:

1. To what extent are partnership teachers, university supervisors, and interns currently implementing components of the Cognitive Coaching Model during internship experiences?
2. Does Cognitive Coaching continue to be a viable model of supervision as clinical and internship experiences grow and change?
3. What support structures are needed to assure partnership teachers, supervisors, and interns are able to implement the model with fidelity?

Methods

The case study method involves interpretive inquiry focused on observing a particular phenomenon within its context. Yin (2003) defines a case study as “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13). Stake (2000) explains, “The case...plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case still is looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps the researcher to pursue the external interest” (p. 437). Case studies represent an important pedagogical and research technique that humanizes and deepens understanding. Additionally, an embedded case study design (Yin, 2003) allows for a more detailed discussion of Cognitive Coaching in multiple contexts.

Data Sources

This study involves multiple data sources:

- **Interns:** Survey of Spring 2016 interns (37.63% response rate, n=70) and follow-up focus group (n=2)
- **Partnership Teachers:** Survey of Spring 2016 partnership teachers (19.15% response rate, n=54) and follow-up focus group (n=6)
- **University Supervisors:** Survey of 39 university supervisors (52.78% response rate, n=19) and follow up focus group (n=4)

WCE Program Rate of Response

	EYC	ELEM	MG	SEC	SPED	PE	FL
Spring Interns	4.35% n=3	53.63% n=37	11.6% n=8	17.39% n=12	8.7% n=6	1.45% n=1	2.9% n=2
University Supervisors	5.88% n=1	70.59% n=12	11.76% n=2	23.54% n=4	5.88% n=1	5.88% n=1	--

Partnership Teacher Grade Range

	Pre-K	K-5	6-8	9-12
Partnership Teachers	4.08% n=2	53.06% n=26	16.33% n=8	34.69% n=17

Years of Experience

	< 1 Year	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	10+ Years
Partnership Teachers	30.61% n=15	16.33% n=8	16.33% n=8	14.29% n=7	22.45% n=11
University Supervisors	--	21.05% n=4	15.79% n=3	21.05% n=4	42.11% n=8

Initial Findings

- When provided a detailed description of the Cognitive Coaching Model, 86.76% (n=59) of interns strongly agree or agree that partnership teachers and supervisors implemented

the Model with fidelity; however, comments suggest the fidelity of implementation decreased as the semester became busier and time became an issue.

- 41.43% (n=29) of interns report sitting down to discuss their teaching with their partnership teacher 1-2 times per week. 21.43% (n= 15) discussed their teaching 3-4 times per week and 37.14% (n=26) sat down to discuss their teaching 5 or more times per week. This somewhat aligns with partnership teachers whereas 39.62% (n=21) reported meeting 1-2 times per week, 45.28% (n=25) reported meeting 3-4 times per week, and 15.09% (n=8) indicated they met 5 or more times per week.
- When asked to select the methods their partnership teachers used to provide feedback post-observation 92.86% (n=65) of interns chose verbal feedback, followed by coaching plans (48.57%, n=34) and written/typed observation notes (42.86%, n=30). This aligned with the responses of partnership teachers who, like the interns, placed emphasis on providing verbal feedback (96.30%, n=52), using coaching plans (74.07%, n=40) and using written/typed observation notes (61.11%, n=33).
- Most comments regarding the benefits of the coaching process for interns and partnership teachers addressed the focus on feedback and communication as being essential.
 - *It keeps communication consistent between the partner teacher and the intern. It also served as a point for growth. If we had not followed this process, I would not have been able to measure my growth nor know how to improve in certain areas. I also appreciated all of the positive feedback that I received from my PT. –WCE Intern*
- Both partnership teachers (96.23%, n=51) and supervisors (88.89%, n=16) believe the Cognitive Coaching Model meets their current needs for supervision.
- Each audience was asked whether the number of coaching plans (8-10) that interns are expected to complete is sufficient:
 - Interns: 53.62% (n= 37) said the number is just right; 44.93% (n=31) said the number is too high
 - Partnership Teachers: 85.71% (n=42) said the number is just right; 12.24% (n=6) said the number is too high
 - University Supervisors: 63.16% (n=12) said the number is just right; 26.32% (n=5) said the number is too high
- When asked to discuss the benefits of Coaching Plans for partnership teachers and interns, both audiences mention goal setting, highlighting intern strengths, opportunities for feedback, and reflection. Supervisors also mentioned collaboration as a benefit.
 - *Coaching Plans open up the door for communication on how the intern is doing. My partnership teacher and I discussed my progress on a daily basis, but by giving her the area in which I was focusing on, she was able to give me suggestions throughout the week in that area. The focus is not simply for the intern, but for the partnership teacher to guide their advice as well. - WCE Intern*
 - *The plans hold the interns and the PTs accountable...but the PTs need to be able to access the plans. - WCE Partnership Teacher*
- Partnership teachers, university supervisors, and interns identified time as the main challenge in implementing the Cognitive Coaching Model and in completing coaching plans. Interns also addressed the difficulty in identifying topics for eight coaching plans. Partnership teachers mentioned wanting to be able to access the coaching plans in order to better monitor and provide additional feedback. Supervisors feel the plans become a chore when interns are not invested and that the intern and partnership teacher may not be “on the same page.”

- 53.06% (n=26) of partnership teachers and 78.95% (n=15) of supervisors indicated they would like further professional development to support their implementation of the Cognitive Coaching Model. Both prefer a hybrid model of instruction.

Recommendations and Future Opportunities

The data suggests interns, partnership teachers, and supervisors see value in the Cognitive Coaching Model. Each audience was able to accurately describe the stages of coaching and provide examples of how the Model and tools that support the Model have been implemented. It is recommended that the results and findings presented in this summary be shared with all PDS partners to provide background for conversations related to coaching and to help focus and prioritize the professional development and support of interns, partnership teachers, and supervisors. The following recommendations are based on key findings presented above:

- Provide additional professional development opportunities for supervisors and partnership teachers focused on enhancing coaching skills. Consider providing an initial regional face-to-face orientation for new partnership teachers and online follow up or follow up via Professional Learning Day.
- Consider implications for decreasing the number of Coaching Plans and/or allowing partnership teacher/supervisor to determine number of coaching plans based on intern performance. Additional considerations might also include documentation of intern growth. If partnership teachers and interns are, first and foremost, using Coaching Plans as the main source of written feedback, consideration of other formative documentation to support intern growth is recommended. In addition, it is recommended that partnership teachers are provided with access to coaching plans.
- Reiterate the importance of a triad of communication. Some supervisors expressed that the coaching process and plans should not be solely intended for the partnership teacher and intern. Discuss strategies that supervisors, partnership teachers, and interns can use to keep lines of communication open so that supervisors and partnership teachers can work as team in determining coaching focus for interns.

References

- Cogan, M. L. (1973). *Clinical Supervision*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co..
- Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. (1985). Supervision for Intelligent Teaching. *Educational Leadership*, 42(5).
- Costa, A. L., & Garmston, R. J. (1994). *Cognitive coaching: A foundation for renaissance schools*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc..
- Garmston, R., Linder, C., & Whitaker, J. (1993). Reflections on cognitive coaching. *Educational Leadership*, 51(2), 57-61.
- Goldhammer, R. (1969). *Clinical supervision: Special methods for the supervision of teachers*. Holt McDougal.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. (3rd ed.). London: Sage.