

Teacher engagement in instructional coaching: A systematic review of motivational drivers, barriers, and implementation strategies



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ABSTRACT

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Although instructional coaching is increasingly used as a form of professional development, its efficacy is contingent on teacher participation, which is influenced by both psychological and contextual factors. This systematic review examines qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research with the aim of understanding engagement, its measurement, and influencing factors. Through the application of motivational and organizational theories, the review highlights important factors enabling engagement such as autonomy, relevance of the instruction, self-efficacy, and support at the leadership level. Barriers to engagement include lack of time, role ambiguity, insufficient resources, and unsupportive school climates. Evidence supports the need for adaptive coaching models, engagement-focused collaborative goal-setting, trust development, and technology to strengthen participation. Regardless of importance, engagement has the most flexible, loosely defined, and poorly assessed criteria across the body of research. One of the most important insights is that coaching is most effective when it is tailored to fit the psychological needs of teachers and the realities of their working environments. This study is one of the few that investigates teacher engagement in instructional coaching through an integrated lens of motivational and organizational theory. The primary contribution of the paper is the finding that sustained engagement relies on this alignment. Additionally, the study documents the internal and external factors that influence participation.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is one of the few that investigates teacher engagement in instructional coaching through an integrated lens of motivational and organizational theory. The paper's primary contribution is the finding that sustained engagement depends on this alignment. This study further documents the internal and external factors that influence participation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Instructional coaching has become a primary mode of professional learning for teachers and, by extension, a means of improving student learning (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). Instructional coaching is fundamentally different from traditional episodic professional development through its ongoing, job-embedded nature and a supportive reliance on relational work that aligns with the emergent realities of classroom practice (Gibbons & Cobb, 2017;

[Knight, 2007](#)). Instructional coaching is fundamentally illustrated as a collaborative, iterative process where teachers are prompted to reflect critically on their practice, try new ways of teaching and/or learning, and receive direct, individualized feedback over time. As a support model, instructional coaching can best align with the conceptualization of self-efficacy, leading to sustained improvement in teaching and learning; by contrast, workshops designed merely for compliance rarely achieve this outcome. However, although substantial investments have been made in coaching systems and programs, the results are often less impactful than originally intended. Teacher engagement is the decisive factor in determining whether instructional coaching functions as a mere compliance exercise or as a genuine transformation in practice. ([Ali, Zhang, & Zainuddin, 2020](#); [Hobson & Maxwell, 2020](#)). For some, coaching offers empowering opportunities for professional growth. For others, it appears irrelevant, intrusive, or threatening, weakening commitment and leading to disengagement in the form of resistance, avoidance, or superficial compliance. Such patterns erode trust, undermine professional norms, and cast doubt on the value of institutional investment when coaching fails to drive authentic instructional change.

Researchers have pointed to several reasons why teachers may disengage from instructional coaching. These include factors such as intrinsic motivation, the quality of relationships between coaches and teachers, the level of support within schools, and broader sociocultural or policy contexts ([Ji, 2023](#)). Despite these insights, existing research on coaching is still scattered and inconsistent. Only a small number of studies have systematically compared or integrated findings to show what truly helps or hinders teachers' genuine engagement.

This systematic review was designed to address that gap through a structured and inclusive approach. It brings together qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies conducted in a variety of K–12 educational settings. To ensure consistency and transparency, the review applied a clear evidence extraction protocol and analytic procedures established in advance. Rather than compiling anecdotes or isolated findings, it focused on identifying broader patterns, highlighting contradictions, and examining how context shapes outcomes.

The goal of this review is to clarify how engagement in instructional coaching has been conceptualized, measured, and understood as effective. It also aims to identify the internal and external factors that influence engagement and to distill a practical set of design principles and implementation strategies that can foster deeper, more meaningful teacher participation. To guide this work, the review is organized around the following research questions.

RQ1: How is teacher engagement with instructional coaching conceptualized and measured in the existing literature?

RQ2: What factors promote or hinder teacher engagement with instructional coaching?

RQ3: What strategies have been identified or recommended to improve teacher engagement in instructional coaching?

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

To gain a better conceptualization of how and, more importantly, why teachers engage with instructional coaching, this review uses Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Adult Learning Theory (ALT), and Organizational Support Theory (OST) to consider not only how they engage but also why teachers engage with instructional coaching. Each of these frameworks considers engagement as a dynamic, context-dependent process. Personal needs, design for learning, and institutional structures all shape engagement. A reading of the literature across these lenses yielded three thematic insights: motivation based on basic psychological needs, adult learners' desire for relevance and reflection, and the organizational climate's role in influencing whether coaching felt supportive instead of corrective.

Self-Determination Theory [Deci and Ryan \(2000\)](#) conceptualizes engagement through the constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When teachers feel they have choices, believe in their ability to succeed, and trust their coach, they experience higher emotional and cognitive engagement. Research ([Ji, 2023](#); [Witherspoon, Thompson, & Berry, 2021](#)) shows that designing coaching with a focus on collaboration rather than evaluation

promotes professional respect and ownership over practice. Teachers perceive those "political and emotional signals" of trust, which not only reinforce teachers' knowledge and expertise but also provide insight into how SDT's psychological needs foster genuine engagement.

Adult Learning Theory Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2015) indicates that adults learn most effectively when their experiences build upon prior knowledge, connect to their lives through challenges, and are driven by self-directed inquiry. As demonstrated by Knight (2007) partnership model and Huang (2023), context-sensitive coaching in Taiwan, when the goals are co-constructed and the feedback is based on the realities of classroom instruction, teachers learn to engage in active experimentation and reflection rather than just showing up to the coaching session. Thus, ALT helps explain that when coaching is relevant and addresses opportunities for reflection, merely showing up can become legitimate pedagogical inquiry.

Organizational Support Theory Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) reinforces how important school climate is: schools that have a fair, respectful, and supportive climate promote valued participation from teachers, while top-down or remediation approaches to coaching diminish a sense of engagement. Ali et al. (2020) and Saclarides (2023) confirm that even the most willing teachers withdraw when coaching is perceived as observation. Mindful of these limitations, I used theory reflexively as a compass rather than a map and questioned Western individualistic interpretations, while also remaining attentive to the contextualized aspects of trust, power, and the socio-political context. I believe this reflexivity both informs the theoretical framing and opens critical discussion of how autonomy, relevance, and support intersect in different educational contexts.

Table 1. An integrated theoretical framework for teacher engagement.

Theory	Element	Claim	References
Self-determination theory (SDT)	Autonomy	Autonomy gives teachers control over goals, reducing resistance.	Ryan and Deci (2020)
	Competence	Competence boosts confidence and cognitive engagement.	
	Relatedness	Relatedness fosters trust and emotional safety with coaches.	
Adult learning theory (ALT)	Relevance	Relevance keeps learning connected to real classroom needs.	Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2020).
	Reflection	Reflection promotes deeper thinking.	
	Self-direction	Self-direction supports experimentation and agency.	
Organizational support theory (OST)	Leadership Support	Leadership support validates effort and protects time.	Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) and Hobson and Maxwell (2020)
	Cultural framing	Cultural framing positions coaching as a collaborative process rather than an evaluative one.	
	Structural resources	Resources remove logistical barriers to sustained practice.	

In Table 1, an integrated theoretical framework is provided, which synthesizes the major components of Self-Determination Theory, Adult Learning Theory, and Organizational Support Theory, all of which relate with specific assertions to the influences of psychological, pedagogical, and institutional factors on teacher engagement with instructional coaching.

3. METHODS

3.1. Design

The systematic review follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021), which provide guidance to increase transparency, reproducibility, and comprehensiveness. The review synthesized empirical studies investigating teacher engagement with instructional

coaching in K–12 contexts, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. To ensure a reliable review process, two reviewers were involved in each phase from searching and screening to data extraction and appraisal. The reviewers engaged with the same processes and resolved disagreements through discussion and consensus. To promote the trustworthiness of the review, an iterative and reflexive approach was adopted, involving memo writing, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail to document analytic decisions. This approach is supported by Gallo-Fox and Scantlebury (2016), emphasizing collaborative reflexivity and continuous improvement during the synthesis of coaching-related studies.

3.2. Search

The database retrieval process was followed with a pre-event protocol that maintained consistency across all four databases, which resulted in 235 records from ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. All four databases were selected because the subject area is educational research, and all four met standards typical of conducting systematic reviews, adopting a fair and consistent approach. The process of searching ERIC involved structured field searches, using Boolean logic with layers, in order to locate 63 peer-reviewed articles. Google Scholar was less precise but had to be approached with caution. For this database, we used concise, searchable phrases in quotation marks, applied iteratively, and with manual screening at the point of retrieval to consider both the scholarly relevance and the source of credibility.

Web of Science returned 14 studies as a result of structured topic queries related to interdisciplinary literature in education, psychology, and professional development. Scopus returned five studies that met the criteria based on its limited indexing of education research. All databases were treated as independent searches, and each phase was documented in a structured search log (see Appendix 1). Search terms were fixed once established, and filters were applied to all databases identically. This ensures the dataset matches most closely with the review's conceptual emphases. Search outputs are summarized in Table 2, detailing how queries were structured and the number of articles returned from each database.

Table 2. Search strategies and retrieval results by database.

Database	Search string example	Number of retrieved articles
ERIC (EBSCOhost)	TI (Instructional coaching or teacher coaching or educational coaching) and AB (Teacher engagement or teacher motivation or teacher participation or professional development attitudes) and AB (In-service teachers or classroom teachers) and AB (Barriers or facilitators or challenges or perceptions or implementation or uptake)	63 (Criteria: Full-text, published in peer-reviewed academic journals.)
Scopus	Title-ABS-Key ("Instructional coaching" or "teacher coaching" or "educational coaching") and ("Teacher engagement" or "teacher motivation" or "teacher participation" or "teacher attitudes")	5
Web of science	TS= ("Instructional coaching" OR "teacher coaching" OR "educational coaching") AND TS= ("Teacher engagement" OR "teacher motivation" OR ("Teacher participation" OR "teacher attitudes"))	14
Google scholar	"Instructional coaching" and "teacher engagement" and "in-service teachers" and (Barriers or motivation or resistance or implementation or participation)	153

3.3. Screen

We set clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to provide a focus: we wanted empirical studies, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, where instructional coaching was described as a primary component of any professional development for in-service K-12 teachers and included some reporting of engagement of the teachers (e.g., motivation, resistance, participation, or any other emotional and cognitive experiences). Eligible empirical studies were provided in English and full text. We excluded studies on pre-service teachers, higher education, general professional development unrelated to instructional coaching, mentoring plans unrelated to coaching, editorials, concept papers, and abstract published empirical studies that were inaccessible.

We retrieved 235 records from ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, and used de-duplication and rapid automated screening, which resulted in 129 pools of records. After those two blinded reviewers screened the titles and abstracts, 34 records were removed (and 95 full texts were reviewed). Of these, 18 were inaccessible, and 54 were excluded because they did not have sufficient focus related to coaching (n=16), limited engagement data (n=12), incorrect population (n=9), or other methodological reasons. Ultimately, we synthesized 34 studies (see Figure 1, PRISMA flow chart).

Finally, we evaluated each study using the 2018 Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) across five judgment-specific criteria sampling strategy, clarity of research, integration of data (if mixed methods), and reflexivity. We categorized studies as high quality, moderate quality, and low quality, but we retained all studies for synthesis, as suggested by Boocock, Bruns, and Squires (2021). In our analysis, we provided appropriate context for lower-rated studies and gave greater weight to the interpretative responses of studies rated higher, but we were transparent about our evaluation of methodological quality and inclusiveness.

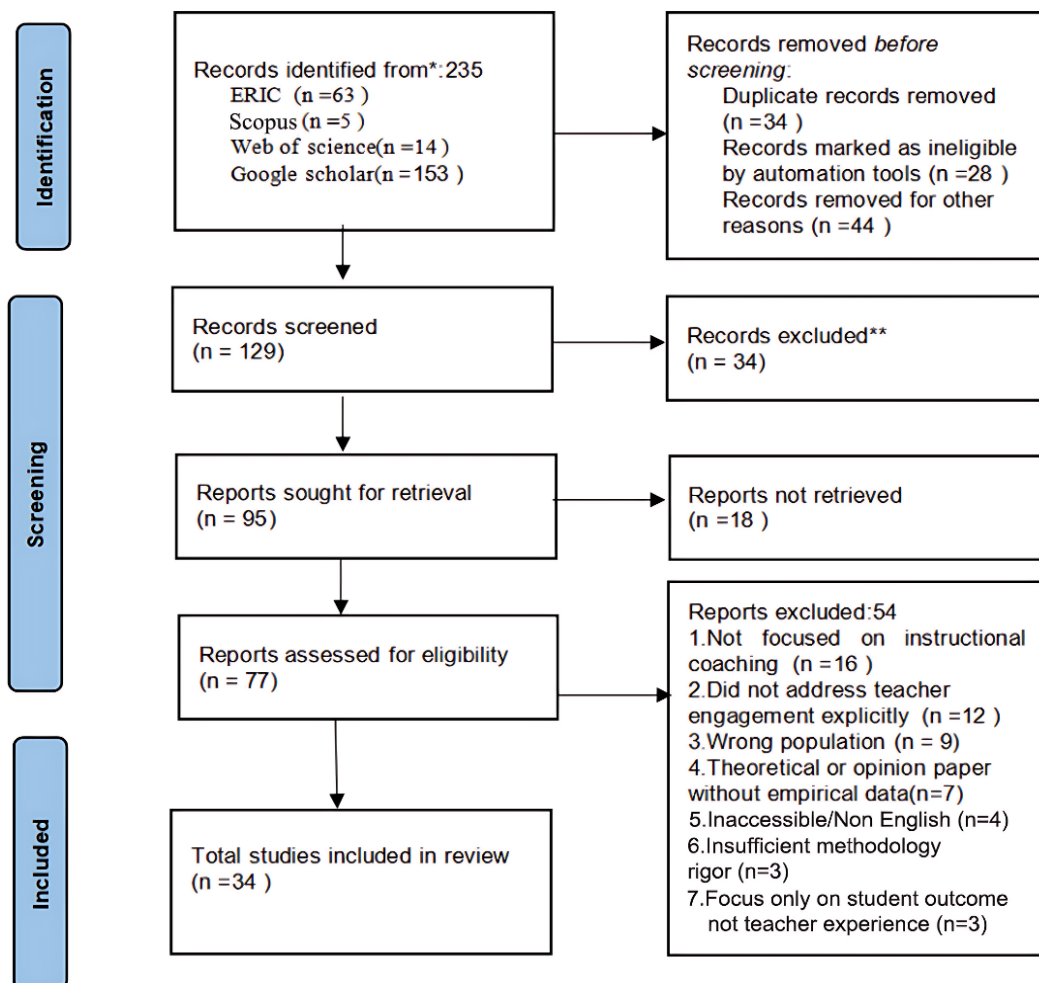


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow chart.

3.4. Extraction

We created a standardized data extraction form based on our conceptual framework and research objectives, and improved it after an initial pilot to confirm transparency and coverage. After the extraction form was finalized, it was consistently used within all included studies to guide the extraction of relevant information, which included: references (e.g., author, year, country), study design, coaching program and its characteristics, participant characteristics, engagement definitions and measures, and relevant illustrative quotes or findings on motivators, barriers, and facilitators for engagement. Two independent reviewers extracted data simultaneously, documenting each study's design; coaching model; population characteristics; and behaviorally, cognitively, or emotionally referencing engagement, and in vivo indicators (i.e., "feeling safe," "top-down pressure," "trial and error learning") to retain conceptual integrity. Reviewer discrepancies were resolved through a structured discussion, and a third reviewer would intervene if necessary; no further additions or changes could be made to the form post-extraction to ensure consistent use of the extracted data within the intended methodology.

Our extraction matrix was explicitly developed for the purposes of thematic synthesis, as our analysis identified factors across the included studies that mapped the data around our theoretical lenses of Self Determination Theory, Ryan and Deci (2009), Adult Learning Theory and Organizational Support Theory, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), thus minimizing and maintaining conceptual integrity. All decisions made during the process were recorded to establish an audit trail and to increase transparency in our process. Whereas after the completion of the extraction process, the quality of methodology was assessed for each study using the Hong et al. (2018) and was assigned a rating of high, moderate, or low. In accordance with Boocock et al. (2021), all studies were included; the lower-rated studies provided breadth and were used to a lesser extent in the interpretations of engagement, while higher-quality studies were utilized for our primary analytical consideration based on time, with lower importance placed on studies that rated lower. This approach provided a balance and informed our analysis through inclusion and trustworthiness.

3.5. Synthesis

We used a pre-specified analysis approach selecting either narrative or quantitative synthesis based on the data/specified variables' compatibility. When using narrative synthesis, we documented and tabulated the features of each study, compared the findings, and traced how each study described (or evaluated) teacher engagement. When two or more studies reported the same kinds of participants, interventions, and outcomes, we conducted random-effects meta-analyses to produce pooled estimates of the effects (95% CI). We reported the I^2 value for heterogeneity, with more than 50% as our benchmark for substantial heterogeneity, and we used subgroup or sensitivity analysis to further explore dimensions within the data.

To protect against bias, we assessed publication bias using funnel plots and Egger's tests when we pooled at least 10 studies. When we synthesized, all choices related to narrative versus meta-analysis were made a priori to avoid any post hoc approach situation. We also used PRISMA 2020, kept an audit trail of every decision, and provided a PRISMA flow diagram to demonstrate study selection.

4. FINDING

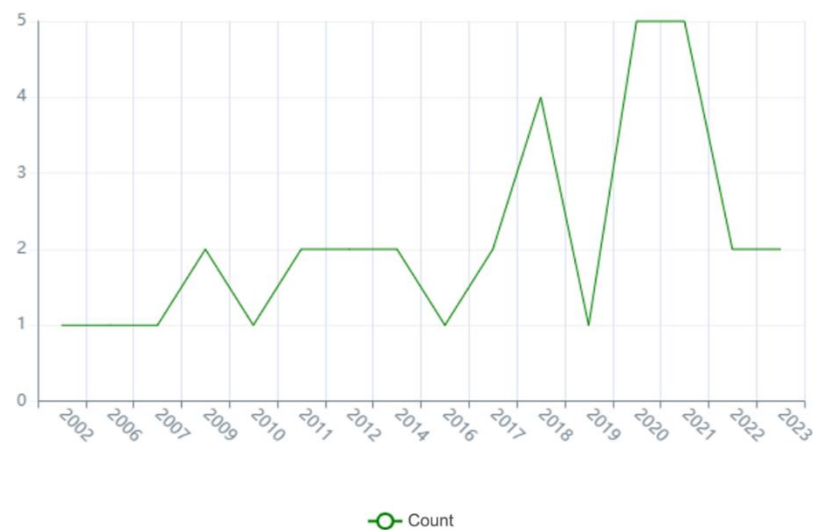
We examined the data in relation to three separate research questions. We combined quantitative relationships, participant quotes, and qualitative interpretations to best illustrate the complex nature of (teacher) engagement. Writing reflective memos as we analyzed different study contributions provided essential support to negotiate a balance between emotionally-led stories and data describing behaviour and organizational structure, while also providing guidance from multiple forms of evidence to ground the themes derived from the study contributions. The perspective presented by Jensen and Sonenshein (2022) further enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of our thematic synthesis results.

4.1. Descriptive Overview

The 34 studies included in this synthesis were reviewed across four dimensions: type of study, research design, country of origin, and publication trend (see Figure 2). Publication activity remained relatively modest before 2017 but rose considerably afterward, with 58.8% of the studies published between 2017 and 2023. Notably, five studies were published in both 2020 and 2021, marking the peak years of output. In terms of geographical distribution, the majority of studies originated from the United States (24 studies), underscoring a strong U.S.-based dominance in the field. In contrast, contributions from other countries were minimal, with only one study each from Belgium, Turkey, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Australia, Malaysia, Israel, and Canada. This distribution highlights both the predominance of U.S.-based literature and the limited representation of international research.

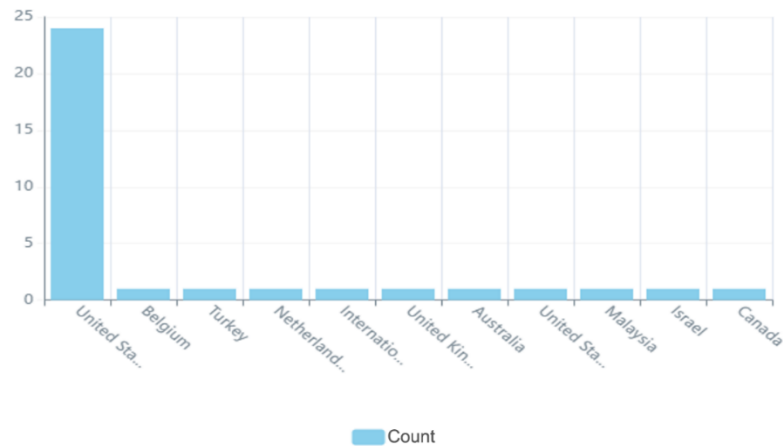
The distribution of study types reveals that qualitative studies (35.3%, blue) and quantitative studies (35.3%, green) are equally represented, together accounting for the majority of reviewed research. Mixed-methods studies (11.8%, orange) constitute the next largest share, while smaller proportions are attributed to literature reviews (5.9%, yellow), conceptual papers (3%, pink), and quantitative meta-analyses (2.9%, purple). In terms of research designs, a wide range of approaches were employed, with exploratory studies emerging as the most common, followed by narrative inquiry and embedded case studies. Other designs such as surveys, longitudinal studies, structural equation modeling, and randomized controlled trials appeared only once each, indicating both methodological diversity and a predominance of descriptive, non-experimental

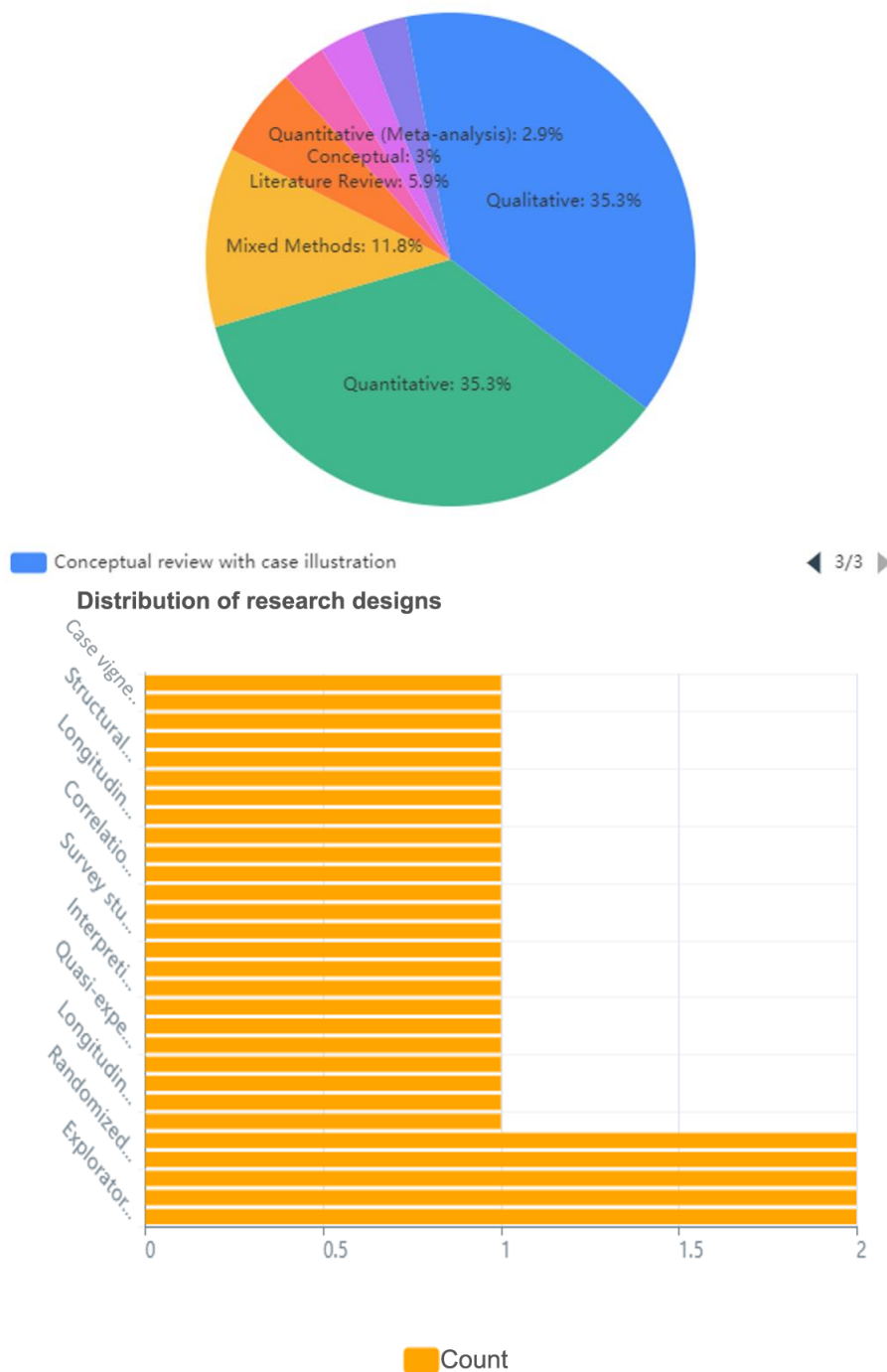
Publication trend over years



approaches.

Number of studies by country



Distribution of study types**Figure 2.** Composite figure: Descriptive summary of reviewed studies.**4.2. RQ1: How Is Teacher Engagement Conceptualized and Measured?**

Teacher engagement spanned the range of consideration across the 34 studies reviewed, predominantly as behavioral engagement but also as a more multifaceted construct, with an emerging recognition of cognitive reflection and emotional attachment. About 62% of the studies (e.g., Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton, 2015) presented teacher engagement measures as observable behaviors, such as attendance, number of sessions, or fidelity to the protocol. While these aspects were clear and relatively scalable indicators of engagement, researchers tied to these indicators each acknowledge they cannot explain everything—high attendance was not always tied to high learning.

A small number of studies (e.g., Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Saclarides, 2023; Witherspoon et al., 2021) utilized reflective journal writing or interviews to access the teachers' internal engagement. Saclarides, for example, developed a combined index of behavioral and cognitive indicators across different kinds of observable engagements, which represented a step forward toward a more comprehensive approach to measuring engagement, even though, as previously pointed out, the lack of standardization makes comparisons challenging. A few studies (e.g., Ali et al., 2020; Hobson & Maxwell, 2020; Ji, 2023) also described the role of emotional engagement, with indications that trust and psychological safety are precursors to authentic engagement. For example, Ji (2023) described teachers "showing vulnerability" as a pivotal moment in the teachers' transition from adhering to compliance to commitment.

In bringing together various aspects of engagement, it was clear that there was no study that articulated engagement as an integrated, multi-dimensional conceptualization; although many addressed behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects of engagement implicitly, this fragmentation limits the knowledge base for the field to engage in cumulative knowledge building. Rimm-Kaufman, Storm, and Patton (2022) acknowledged this aspect of accumulation in their call for a standard, multi-dimensional model with measurement approaches aligned with lived experiences from coaches' and teachers' experiences of working together. The following visual (Figure 3) draws on this animate aspect of engagement and summarizes the multi-dimensional conceptualization of the studies in the review, considering studies as falling within behavior, cognitive, and emotional domains.

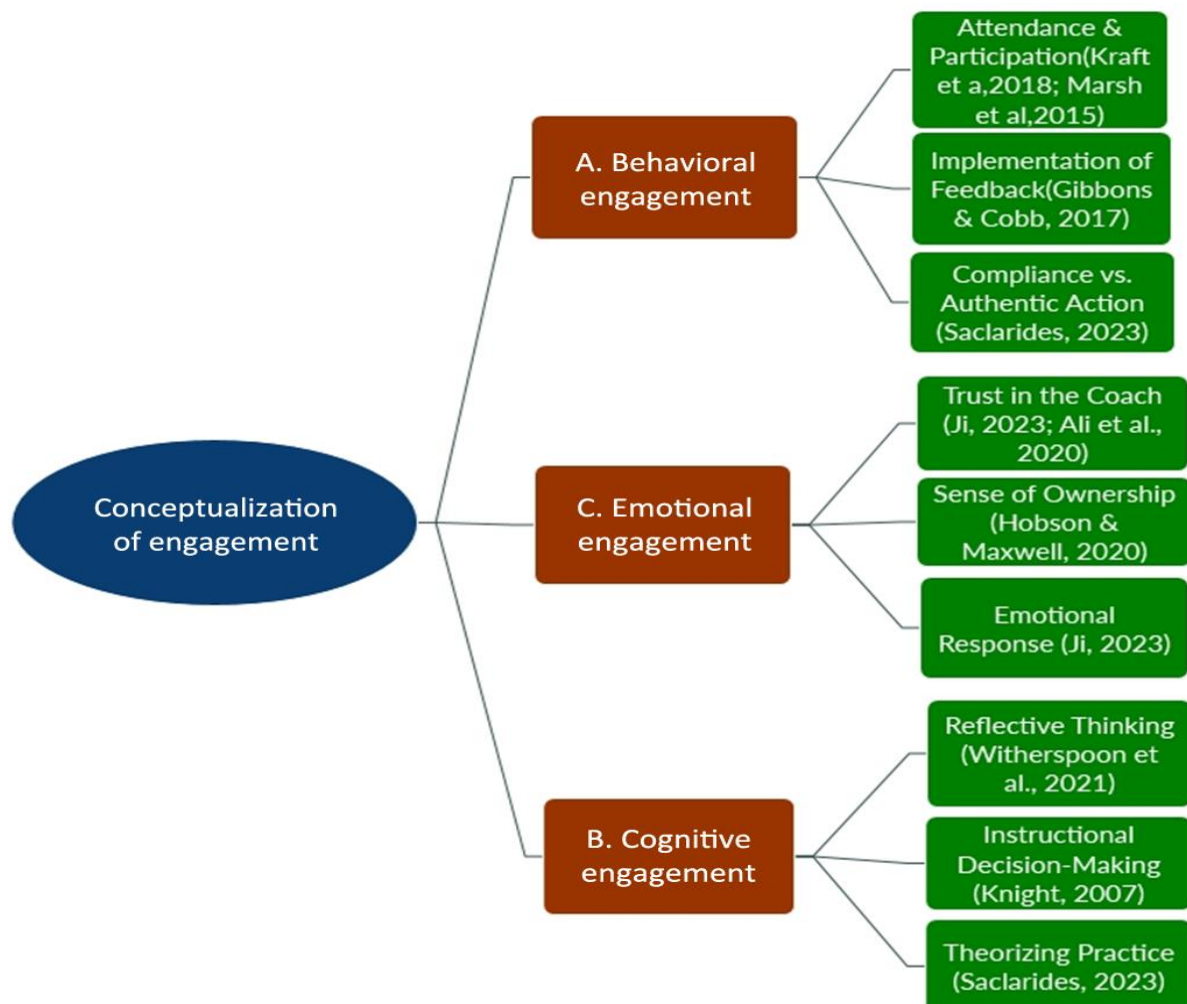


Figure 3. Conceptualization of engagement across behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions.

Source: Kraft et al. (2018); Marsh et al. (2015); Gibbons and Cobb (2017); Saclarides (2023); Ji (2023); Ali et al. (2020); Hobson and Maxwell (2020); Witherspoon et al. (2021) and Knight (2007).

4.3. RQ2: What Factors Support or Interfere with Engagement?

We organized our synthesis around two pre-defined categories internal facilitators and external barriers in order to maintain analytical consistency. Internal facilitators (autonomy, relevance, self-efficacy) were ranked relative to the number of occurrences across studies and appeared in 76% of studies. Each facilitator was coded verbatim based on the original authors' definitions: autonomy was determined by citing the authors' assessments of teachers acting with agency to set their own goals and choose their strategies (e.g., "It mattered more because it was my goal" (Ji, 2023); relevance was embodied in authors' discussions of context-specific coaching directed to the teacher's work (Hobson & Maxwell, 2020; Witherspoon et al., 2021), and self-efficacy was characterized by references to confidence or willingness to engage in the work (Bozer & Jones, 2018). We kept internal facilitators separate in our matrix to avoid retrospectively merging our facilitation themes, while still considering them an analytical aspect of our original frameworks and approaches to coding.

External barriers were coded as time constraints, role ambiguity, and leadership/culture framing. Time was the clear dominant barrier, with authors pointing to time influences overall, while scheduling and planning issues impeded continuous engagement e.g., Kraft et al. (2018) $r = .41$, $p < .01$). Role ambiguity was coded in relation to trust outcomes (Saclarides, 2023) $r = -.44$, $p < .05$). Leadership (or culture) framing was only coded as deference to the study framing organizational norms and/or leadership style on disengagement. The frequency ranking represents the relativistic weight of these external barriers as derived from our extraction matrix. The following Figure 4 provides a visual representation of the overall framework of factors influencing teacher engagement, categorizing them into internal and external dimensions along with supporting literature.

To ensure transparency and reproducibility, we documented all coding and categorizing decisions in an audit trail on our original synthesis form. No post-hoc recoding or regrouping of themes/theme groups was allowed after the first-pass analysis. The result was a clear, repeatable «dual-box» model, with three internal facilitators on one side and three external barriers on the other, to thoroughly describe the influences on teacher engagement, as found in the cases we read and reviewed.

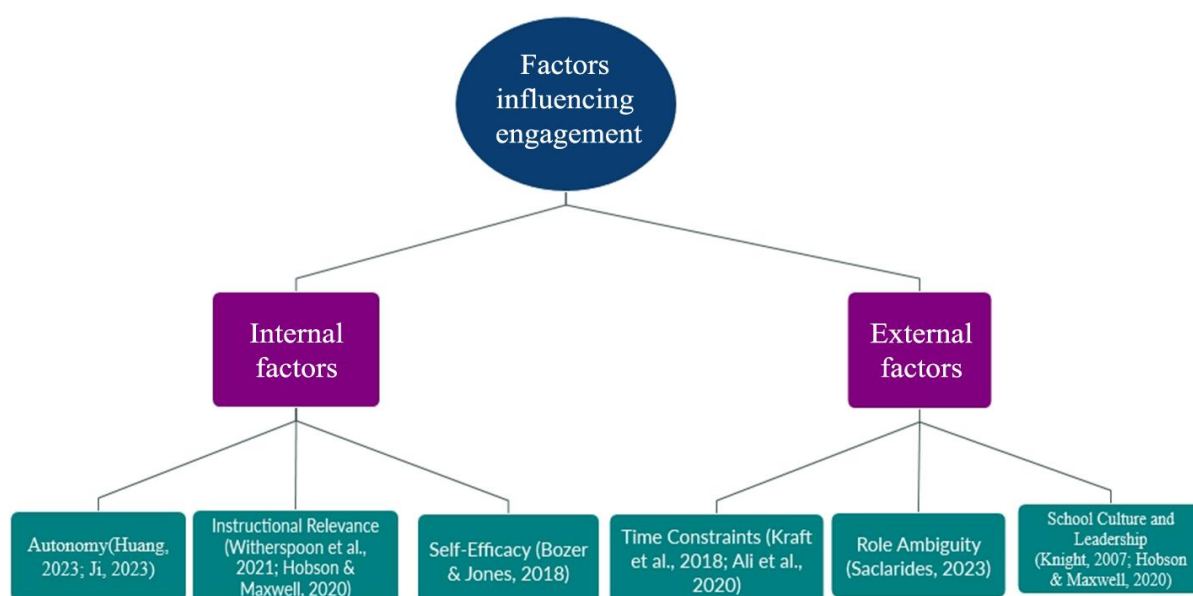


Figure 4. Internal and external factors influencing engagement in instructional coaching.

Source: Huang (2023); Witherspoon et al. (2021); Hobson and Maxwell (2020); Bozer and Jones (2018); Kraft et al. (2018); Ali et al. (2020) and Knight (2007).

4.4. RQ3: Strategies for Supporting Engagement

Suggestions for ways to enhance the engagement of teachers with instructional coaching often emerge from practice and testimony from teachers themselves. In reviewing the literature, five main types of strategies emerge:

adaptations of coaching models, operations/activities that build trust with teachers, system-wide support through collaboration and leadership, technology as an enabler of engagement, and coach professionalism.

4.4.1. Coaching Model Adaptations

Customized coaching models are considered an optimal option for supporting engagement (Griffith, Rimm-Kaufman, & Merritt, 2022). Inflexible, top-down models lack consideration for differences in pedagogical beliefs, situational constraints, and agency (Ji, 2023; Saclarides, 2023; Walsh, Ginger, & Akhavan, 2020). In contrast, developing individualized plans with co-constructed goals, custom pacing, and collaboratively discussing barriers fosters empowerment and agency, but equally, these models require structure and accountability; otherwise, even the most flexible models may suffer from low attendance and low impact.

Qualitative studies provide evidence to determine effectiveness and variation in adaptive coaching. Ji (2023) and Saclarides (2023) found value in collaborative inquiry and co-design; however, some teachers prefer more structured approaches when managing new demands. Operational constraints also pose obstacles: Walsh et al. (2020) highlights that personalized coaching relationships are difficult to scale in environments with limited resources. Similarly, hybrid formats or self-directed designs (Carr, Holmes, & Flynn, 2017; Holmes, Parker, & Gibson, 2017) may be off-putting for those lacking competence or self-efficacy in digital use. Equity and accessibility are equally important if planned co-design systems or programs aim to provide adequate engagement for all teachers.

Quantitative evidence provides more utility alongside qualitative findings. Kraft et al. (2018) meta-analysis suggests that co-constructed advisement programs with personalized goal-setting and teacher feedback produce a moderate-to-large effect on instructional practice ($d=0.58$, $SE=0.09$, 95% CI $[-0.41, 0.75]$), with high heterogeneity indicating limited generalizability. Collectively, both strands of evidence indicate the necessity for mutually adaptive, contextually relevant frameworks which are flexible but bounded to ensure meaningful engagement across demographic and systemic contexts.

4.4.2. Trust-Building and Teacher Voice

Building trust and authentically representing teachers' voices are prerequisites for successful coaching. Studies by Ali et al. (2020), Ji (2023), and Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, and Boatright (2010) demonstrate that the more emotionally safe teachers feel, and the more they are professionally validated and free from punitive judgment, the more willing they are to reflect and take risks in their instruction. Trust is underpinned by confidentiality, a non-evaluative stance, and mutual respect. For example, Ji's participants stated they were open to their coach when conversations were framed as collaborative dialogues rather than evaluative performances. Additionally, Gallucci et al. (2010) analyzed and recorded participants' perspectives before, during, and after coaching cycles, with teacher participation regarding their contribution to the coaching process transforming from a prescriptive approach into self-regulated professional inquiry.

In order to move coaching (and the associated reflection process) away from the surveillance model of inquiry to thinking and practicing as a partnership, coaching can transform from someone else observing the criteria they need to address into co-exploration of a problem, finding ways to personalize the scope of feedback for teachers, and making it relevant to the teacher's grade, class, or surroundings. However, Ji (2020), as well as researchers involved in the coaching process with Gallucci et al. (2010), highlighted that this feeling of agency and partnership might be largely due to the previous encounters with the coaches, and the respect the teachers felt was shown towards their (teacher participants) expertise. They also noted that every step was, more or less, their (the teachers') decision, which helped develop trust in the process and increased teacher ownership. Ali et al. (2020) further demonstrated that evaluative coaching provoked resistance, whereas processes involving empathy, confidentiality, and respect for autonomy facilitated trust-based engagement and decreased skepticism.

In terms of quantitative data further supporting the above, Bozer and Jones (2018) reported an association between relational trust and engagement ($r = 0.42$, 95% CI $[0.30, 0.52]$) across professions, including education. In other words, trust is not something to be 'oh well'; it is a statistically significant predictor of facilitating meaningful participation. For this reason, trust and teachers' voices cannot be seen as additive; rather, they are the foundational elements of purposeful instructional coaching, especially moving away from compliance audits towards purposeful engagement with growth as the focal point.

4.4.3. Peer Collaboration and Supportive Leadership

Collaboration among peers and a culture of collaborative learning are essential for meaningful engagement in instructional coaching. Fletcher and Mullen (2012), Bozer and Jones (2018), and Witherspoon et al. (2021) found that teachers involved in a professional learning community (PLC) perceive coaching as a collaborative growth experience rather than an externally imposed expectation. They provide practical advice and emotional support based on their own teaching contexts as peers, and operate in a "safe space" by sharing challenges, experimenting, and holding each other accountable in a constructive and non-coercive manner.

School-based leadership plays an important role in the credibility and authenticity of coaching. Witherspoon et al. (2021) found that principals providing support, framed as the provision of resources rather than an evaluation process, correlates positively with teachers' openness to coaching. It enables teachers to take risks; for example, one study participant stated that, "knowing that my principal supported this gave me the freedom to take risks" as the endorsement of leadership empowers autonomy and frames the coaching experience as an opportunity rather than an expectation. Evaluative leadership or leadership ambivalence potentially erodes trust, thereby undermining participation.

The quantitative findings provide direct statistical evidence of the relational and organizational factors that shape engagement. For example, Bozer and Jones (2018) reported significant positive correlations between supervisory support and engagement ($r = 0.39$) and between team cohesion and engagement ($r = 0.35$). These results suggest that engagement is fostered not only through one-on-one interactions between coaches and teachers but also within a broader, responsive school ecology. Building networks among peers, both in small groups and across the wider school community, together with visible support from leadership, positions coaching as part of a self-sustaining cycle of ongoing professional learning.

4.4.4. Technology as an Engagement Strategy

Technology has become a crucial enabler of teacher engagement in instructional coaching, especially when time, access, and flexibility can be in short supply. Increasing and growing in quality, literature (e.g., EdResearch for Recovery, 2022; Instructional Coaching in K-12, 2021; Keeping Teachers Afloat, 2023) highlights the digital tools, such as video, parity, and scheduling platforms, that create a low barrier to entry for teachers to increase their engagement. It is clear that, in these taxing time-constrained environments, technology isn't an option but a necessity for differentiating coaching and creating autonomy regarding when and how teachers engage. Asynchronous video coaching allows teachers to reflect and receive feedback on their development at their convenience, resulting in more deliberate self-reflection and reduced defensiveness. With that said, the value of technology in instructional coaching must be grounded in intentional use: any platform must support, not supplant, the interpersonal trust and empathic conversation that provide the essence of impactful coaching.

The research suggests that technology-enhanced models are effective. Kraft et al. (2018) found that video-based, asynchronous instructional coaching produced instructional changes nearly equal to in-person coaching ($d = 0.45$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI $[0.29, 0.61]$) with no significant difference. Although the data indicates that technology may yield slightly smaller effect sizes compared to highly individualized support models, the informed use of technology broadens potential solutions in cases where in-person support is impractical. In conclusion, technology does not serve

as a universal solution for all coaching challenges but enhances engagement by providing more access points, fostering reflective and autonomous decision-making, and better aligning with the school context by addressing barriers faced by teachers.

4.4.5. Coach Credibility and Ongoing Development

In addition to program structure, relationships, and technology, coach credibility and expertise have been identified as essential to teacher participation in instructional coaching. Knight (2007), Bozer and Jones (2018), and Hobson and Maxwell (2020) have all indicated that trustworthiness, clarity in communicating coaching goals, and demonstrated pedagogical skills are primary factors influencing participation in instructional coaching. As one teacher said, "It is not only the model... it is the person who is leading it."

5. DISCUSSION

The engagement of teachers in instructional coaching is a multifaceted and context-dependent phenomenon that can be examined through various perspectives. It encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, such as attendance, participation, and engagement (Kraft et al., 2018; Marsh et al., 2015). These dimensions serve as lower-level indicators of engagement and demonstrate that "active involvement, interest, and concentration are indicative of engagement" (Ji, 2023; Saclarides, 2023). Because engagement is not a static state and can occur through various practices, research methods (i.e., survey, phenomenological, mixed-methods, randomized controlled trials) might differ while building the same integral components that connect engagement theory to practice. Research design provides a structure to extract and synthesize engagement themes for different engagement constructs; however, it often exposes challenges with synthesizing gaps in reporting engagement in mixed methods research.

The findings emphasized the role of internal motivators (autonomy, self-efficacy, relevance, and relatability, etc.) in maintaining engagement. Participants recognized that co-constructing goals, seeing that coaching was aligned with their instructional priorities, and feeling like they owned the goals gave engagement a positive perspective rather than an evaluative context (Ji, 2023; Witherspoon et al., 2021). Our results are consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Schwartz, 1994) and Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1980), where agency, competence, and meaningful context were required for adult learning to occur.

The results also shed light on the role of external and/or organizational factors that also impact levels of engagement and flextime autonomy. A number of internal and/or structural constraints (i.e., time, confusion of role, and mixed messaging from leaders) can overwhelm even the most intrinsically motivated teacher (Ali et al., 2020; Hobson & Maxwell, 2020). Organizational Support Theory illustrates the importance of invested resources perceived in the relationship (i.e., protected time, visible support/commitment from leadership), as these resources engender a reciprocity response in engagement, contributing to decreased levels of disengagement and a potential increase in engagement. Remembering that systematic structures need to be designed to enable the new behaviors consistent with the design of the intervention rather than just educational supports is important.

Finally, it was clear that aspects of relational quality (trust, credibility, co-inquiry, etc.) were important elements contributing to engagement. Coaches with specialized subject matter expertise must bridge that trust level of competency, emotionality, and humility with the interlocutor to provide the reality space needed for authentic risk-taking (Bozer & Jones, 2018; Knight, 2007). There were quantitative links made between aspects of relational trust ($r = 0.50$) and forms of engagement. Going forward, research and practice need to push into integrated, longitudinal approaches to articulate cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement, while designing coaching recruitment, protected structures, and tech-enhanced formats that honor the relational context of engagement in both coaching and instructional practices.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the review finds that engagement of teachers with IC is a function of the complex interplay of internal factors autonomy, relevance, and self-esteem when combined with external organizational support. As teachers are granted authentic agency, perceive coherence between the coaching and their classroom reality, and are actually pushed to grow professionally, coaching can become both collaborative and empowering rather than top-down and evaluative.

Nevertheless, readers should interpret the conclusions of this review with caution due to several key limitations. The wide range of methodologies from qualitative case studies to quasi-experimental designs makes it difficult to generalize the findings to broader populations. Most of the research originates in the United States, which may restrict cultural applicability, and much of the data relies on self-reports, increasing the risk of bias and inaccuracy. These limitations highlight the need for careful interpretation and discourage drawing firm causal conclusions or applying the findings uncritically to other contexts.

To deepen understanding of teachers' engagement with instructional coaching, future research should be conducted with greater methodological consistency and pragmatism. This includes using standardized, multidimensional tools that capture the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions of engagement. Researchers should prioritize longitudinal and cross-national studies to explore how teacher engagement changes over time and across different contexts. They also need to examine how social identity factors such as race, gender, and career stage intersect with institutional structures to influence access to and experiences with coaching. By addressing these gaps, future studies can move beyond surface-level patterns and develop a more nuanced, dispositionally sensitive understanding of teacher development.

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Appendix 1. Summary of included studies: authors, contexts, and methodological approaches.

Author(s)	Title	Year	Country/Context	Study type	Data collection methods	Data analysis methods
Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002)	From teacher isolation to teacher collaboration: A theoretical perspective and empirical findings	2002	Belgium	Qualitative	In-depth interviews, participant observation	Narrative analysis
Göker (2006)	Peer coaching: A study of teacher involvement and motivation	2006	Turkey	Quantitative	Motivation scales, observation checklists	T-tests, ANOVA
Knight (2007)	Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction	2007	United States	Conceptual	N/A	N/A
Cornett and Knight (2008)	Research on coaching: instructional coaching – A review of the literature	2008	United States	Literature review	Document analysis	Thematic coding
Denton and Hasbrouck (2009)	Understanding teachers' Anxiety towards the coaching process	2009	United States	Qualitative	Teacher interviews, field notes	Grounded theory coding
Gallucci et al. (2010)	Teachers' and coaches' motivation to participate in coaching	2010	United States	Qualitative	Observations, interviews, document review	Narrative and coding analysis
Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, and Stover (2011)	Literacy instructional coaching for improving teaching practices	2011	United States	Mixed methods	Surveys, interviews, observations	Descriptive stats, thematic analysis
Saphier and West (2009)	Instructional coaching in K-12: A literature review and discussion questions	2011	United States	Literature review	Document review	Thematic analysis
De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2010)	Teacher collaboration, inclusive education and differentiated instruction	2012	Netherlands	Quantitative	Teacher questionnaires	Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis
Margolis and Doring (2012)	Understanding teacher resistance to instructional coaching	2012	United States	Qualitative	Interviews, reflective journals	Thematic content analysis
Reinke, Stormont, Herman, and Newcomer (2014)	Instructional Coaching Actions That Predict Teacher Classroom Practice	2014	United States	Quantitative	Classroom observations, coach logs	Regression analysis
Zepeda, Parylo, and Bengtson (2012)	Instructional Coaching as a Tool for Professional Development: Coaches' Roles and Considerations	2014	United States	Qualitative	Interviews, document analysis	Thematic coding

	A strategy to implement new instructional practices	2016	United States	Mixed Methods	Interviews, observations, artifact analysis	Thematic analysis and quantitative coding of instructional practice
Shernoff, Sinha, Bressler, and Ginsburg (2017)	Benefits of instructional coaching for teacher efficacy	2017	United States	Quantitative	Surveys, teacher self-reports, classroom observation	Multivariate regression, ANCOVA
Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer, and Kyndt (2017)	Teacher collaboration: A systematic review	2017	International	Systematic Review	Database literature retrieval	Thematic synthesis
Bozer and Jones (2018)	Understanding the factors that determine workplace coaching effectiveness	2018	United Kingdom	Quantitative	Questionnaires	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
Hudson and Hudson (2018)	Using Mentoring, Coaching, and Self-Mentoring to Support Public School Educators	2018	Australia	Mixed Methods	Surveys, interviews, reflective journals	Descriptive statistics, qualitative coding
Kraft et al. (2018)	The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis	2018	United States	Quantitative (Meta-analysis)	Study retrieval from databases	Meta-analytic statistical modeling
Kraft et al. (2018)	A randomized controlled trial of instructional coaching in high-poverty urban school	2018	United States (Urban, high-poverty schools)	Quantitative	Classroom observations, achievement tests	Hierarchical linear modeling, effect size estimation
Williams and Szal (2019)	Empowering teachers through instructional supervision: Using solution-focused strategies in a leadership preparation program	2019	United States	Qualitative	Reflective journals, group discussions, surveys	Narrative and thematic coding
Griffith and Scharmann (2008)	Examining the relationship between the literacy coach's support and teacher instructional change	2008	United States	Quantitative	Teacher surveys, classroom observations	Pearson correlation, regression analysis
Luo and Najjar (2020)	Faculty Peer Coaching: Collaborative Partnerships for Instruction	2020	United States	Qualitative	Focus groups, peer observation reflections	Content analysis
Ramli, Salleh, and Ismail (2020)	Enhancing teachers' self-efficacy supported by coaching	2020	Malaysia	Quantitative	Self-efficacy scales, intervention tracking	Paired sample t-tests, descriptive statistics

Robertson and Mancevice (2020)	Coaching that supports teachers' learning to enact ambitious instruction	2020	United States	Qualitative	Session transcripts, interviews, lesson artifacts	Micro-analytic discourse analysis
Yurkofsky, Baxter, and Stone (2020)	Teachers' perceptions of practice and instructional coaching	2020	United States	Qualitative	Surveys, interviews, document review	Thematic analysis
Alfonzo, Symonds, and Grunow (2020)	Coaches and teachers co-teaching: Exploring the challenges and support of co-teaching as a coaching activity	2021	United States	Qualitative	Interviews, co-teaching observations	Thematic coding
Berkovich and Eyal (2021)	Profiling teachers' motivation for professional development: A nationwide study	2021	Israel	Quantitative	Motivation questionnaire	Cluster analysis, MANOVA
Choppin, Amador, and Ziegenfuss (2021)	Coaching for change: Preparing mathematics teachers for technology integration	2021	United States	Mixed Methods	Observations, surveys, interviews	Quantitative (Descriptive and inferential), qualitative coding
Liang and Akiba (2016)	Factors affecting teachers' engagement in instructional coaching	2021	United States	Quantitative	Online surveys	SEM, factor analysis
Warren and Kelsen (2013)	Analysis of instructional coaching: What, why and how	2021	Canada	Conceptual review with case illustration	Literature synthesis and select interviews	Narrative synthesis
Cohen, Gottfried, and Le (2022)	Experimental evidence on the robustness of coaching supports in teacher education	2022	United States	Quantitative	Surveys, classroom observations, coaching logs	Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM)
Kane, Taylor, and Hallinger (2022)	Evaluation of Video-Based Instructional Coaching	2022	United States	Quantitative	Video recordings, performance rubrics, surveys	ANOVA, descriptive statistics
Montgomery and Kennedy (2023)	Keeping Teachers Afloat with Instructional Coaching	2023	United States	Qualitative	Interviews, coaching logs	Narrative coding
Peters and Matsumura (2023)	Amplifying teachers' voices in the coaching partnership	2023	United States	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews, coaching session transcripts	Grounded theory coding

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