

**THE COACH-TEACHER PARTNERSHIP
BUILDING PROCESS: A MULTIPLE CASE
STUDY ON FOUR ESL COACHING DYADS
IN SARAWAK**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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**THE COACH-TEACHER PARTNERSHIP
BUILDING PROCESS: A MULTIPLE CASE
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IN SARAWAK**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
DTP	District Transformation
ELSQC	English Language Standards and Quality Council
EPRD	Educational Planning and Research Division
FasiLINUS	Literacy and Numeracy Screening Facilitator
GRR	Gradual Release of Responsibility
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking
IAB	Aminuddin Baki Institute
IE	Interpersonal and Communication Coaching
JEPeM	Human Research Ethics Committee of USM
JPN	State Education Offices
NKRA	National Key Result Areas
PADU	Education Performance & Delivery Unit
PBICF	Partnership Building in Coaching Framework
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PPD	District Education Office
SiPartner+	School Improvement Partner Plus
SISC+	School Improvement Specialist Coach Plus
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TCT	Teacher Coaching Tool
TDP	Teacher Development Plan
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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**PROSES PENJALINAN HUBUNGAN KERJASAMA DI ANTARA
PEMBIMBING DAN GURU: SATU KAJIAN PELBAGAI KES KE ATAS
EMPAT HUBUNGAN BIMBINGAN ESL DI SARAWAK**

ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama kajian kualitatif pelbagai kes ini adalah untuk mengkaji penggunaan prinsip Pembelajaran Kerjasama oleh pembimbing instruksional untuk memupuk kerjasama di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru dalam program bimbingan Pembimbing Pakar Peningkatan Sekolah (SISC+) di Malaysia Timur. Kajian ini adalah berdasarkan kepada model bimbingan instruksional oleh Knight (2007) yang mengenal pasti tujuh prinsip Pembelajaran Kerjasama untuk memupuk hubungan kerjasama di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru dalam interaksi bimbingan. Kajian ini juga bermatlamat untuk mengenal pasti prinsip lain yang boleh menyumbang kepada hubungan kerjasama di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru berdasarkan pandangan rakan pembimbing dan guru. Prinsip-prinsip yang paling menyumbangkan kepada hubungan kerjasama dan paling kurang dalam penyumbangan kepada hubungan kerjasama mengikut pandangan rakan pembimbing dan guru turut dikenal pasti. Peserta-peserta kajian terlibat dengan empat hubungan bimbingan yang terdiri daripada seorang rakan pembimbing dan seorang guru dalam satu hubungan bimbingan yang dipilih daripada empat sekolah rendah di Malaysia Timur. Data telah dikumpul menerusi pemerhatian bukan peserta terhadap interaksi bimbingan di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru di dalam proses bimbingan. Empat hubungan bimbingan ditemubual dalam sesi temubual separa berstruktur selepas pengumpulan data secara pemerhatian bimbingan telah mencapai tahap ketepuan data. Analisis data untuk kajian ini menggunakan analisis tematik deduktif. Dapatan daripada kajian ini menunjukkan

tema-tema utama seperti proses penjalinan hubungan kerjasama membina kefahaman di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru, prinsip Pembelajaran Kerjasama yang saling berkait, hasil daripada proses perjalinan hubungan kerjasama dalam bimbingan dan beberapa pengecualian dalam proses penjalinan hubungan kerjasama. Rakan pembimbing mengamalkan prinsip Pembelajaran Kerjasama menerusi tindakan rakan pembimbing dari segi perlakuan, sikap dan bahasa yang diamalkan. Pembinaan kefahaman merupakan prinsip tidak dijangka yang timbul menerusi analisis data iaitu rakan pembimbing dilaporkan terlibat dalam usaha meningkatkan kefahaman terhadap guru yang dibimbing. Prinsip-prinsip yang lebih menyumbangkan kepada hubungan kerjasama di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru mengikut perspektif rakan pembimbing adalah kesaksamaan, suara guru dan refleksi. Prinsip-prinsip yang lebih menyumbangkan kepada hubungan kerjasama di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru berdasarkan perspektif guru adalah kesaksamaan dan timbal balik. Rakan pembimbing menyatakan prinsip pilihan dan praktis merupakan prinsip yang lebih kurang dalam menyumbangkan kepada hubungan kerjasama di antara rakan pembimbing dan guru. Manakala keempat-empat guru memberi prinsip-prinsip yang berlainan (prinsip penyuaran suara guru, refleksi, praktis dan timbal balik) sebagai prinsip yang kurang menyumbangkan kepada penjalinan hubungan kerjasama. Kajian ini mencadangkan implikasi penting untuk menggunakan model Pembelajaran Kerjasama oleh Knight setakat ke suatu tahap di mana pengecualian dalam penggunaan prinsip Pembelajaran Kerjasama dipertimbangkan. Perbezaan budaya merupakan salah satu penyebab kepada penggunaan prinsip-prinsip Pembelajaran Kerjasama. Daripada satu perspektif, guru-guru harus berasa terjamin kerana bimbingan instruksional dijalankan berdasarkan penjalinan hubungan kerjasama dan bukan secara penyeliaan dan autoritatif.

**THE COACH-TEACHER PARTNERSHIP BUILDING PROCESS: A
MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ON FOUR ESL COACHING DYADS IN
SARAWAK**

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to investigate the instructional coaches' use of the Partnership Learning principles to develop coach-teacher partnership in the School Improvement Specialist Coach Plus (SISC+) coaching programme in East Malaysia. This investigation was guided by Knight's (2007) instructional coaching model, which identified the Seven Partnership Learning principles to build on the coach-teacher partnership through the coaching interactions. This study also aimed to identify other principles that could contribute to the coaches-teacher partnership and to identify the most and least contributing Partnership Learning principles from both the coaches and teachers' perspectives. The study respondents involved four coaching dyads which consisted of one coach and one English teacher per dyad selected from four primary schools in East Malaysia. Data was collected through non-participant observations on coaching interactions. The four coaching dyads participated in semi-structured interviews after the data collection on the coaching observations had reached data saturation. Data analysis of this study utilised deductive thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed important themes about the partnership building process, building understanding between the coaches and the teachers, the interrelatedness of the Partnership Learning principles, the outcomes of the partnership building process and some exceptions in the partnership building process. The coaches embodied the Partnership Learning principles through the coaches' actions manifested in their behaviours, attitude and choice of language. Building understanding

was the unanticipated principle that emerged from the data analysis of this study whereby the coaches engaged in the efforts to build understanding with the teachers. The principles that contributed the most in facilitating the coach-teacher partnership in the perspective of the coaches were equality, voice and reflection. The principles that contributed the most in facilitating the coach-teacher partnership in the perspective of the teachers were equality and reciprocity. The coaches chose the principles of choice and praxis as the principles that least contributed to the coach-teacher partnership while all four teachers chose different principles (voice, reflection, praxis and reciprocity). The findings implied that the instructional coaching programme in the Malaysian context should adopt Knight's Partnership Learning model to an extent with considerations of the exceptions in the application of the Partnership Learning principles. Cultural differences were reasoned to be predictive of the adoption of these principles. From one perspective, teachers should be relieved to learn that instructional coaching operated largely based on establishing coach-teacher partnership rather than supervisory or authoritative approach. This study extended the findings of Knight (2007) in the coaches' use of the Partnership Learning principles by generating the Partnership Building in Coaching Framework (PBICF).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about presenting the basis of my current study which will involve the elucidation of the vital parts of the study such as background of the study, the problem statement, the aims and objectives, the research questions, the rationale and significant of the study, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, operational definitions of terms and summary. In short this is to allow the readers to gain a clear picture of what this study is all about.

Reviews of the coaching literature continue to suggest the importance of relationships (Anderson, Feldman & Minstrell, 2014; Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon & Boatright, 2008; Ippolito, 2010b; Taylor, 2008). Coaching, to be successful, relies on good coach-teacher partnership mediated and maintained through the interactions of the coaches and the teachers in conversations with the teachers, in conducting classroom observations of the teachers' lessons and in the debriefing discussions in which the coaches would provide their feedback to the teachers regarding the observed lessons. The coaching relationship, or hereafter also mentioned as partnership building, refers to the coach-teacher interactions that extend from friendly exchanges to productive discussions regarding the teachers' lessons, practices and student performance (Anderson et al., 2014). Ippolito (2009) describes the coaching approach that builds on the coach-teacher relationship as a "responsive" relationship, as opposed to "directive" mode in which coaching would be a top-down process as the coaches play the role of subject-matter experts that aim to change teachers' practices quickly to see results in increased student achievement.

Knight (2007) suggested that to cater to the importance of developing coach-teacher relationships, coaches need to work from the partnership perspective by incorporating the seven Partnership Learning principles in the coach-teacher interactions. The interactions should embody: (i) equality: recognising the collaborating teachers as equal partners; (ii) dialogue: engaging in two-way dialogues with the teachers; (iii) choice: providing choices to the teachers in discovering and implementing practices; (iv) voice: encouraging the teachers to say what they think; (v) reflection: encouraging teachers to reflect on their practices; (vi) praxis: providing opportunities for teachers to apply their learning to their real-life practice; (vii) reciprocity: expecting to learn from the teachers as well in the coaching process. Knight's (2007) model is considered the best practice in instructional coaching by many scholars in the field, especially in the investigation on how to establish coach-teacher relationships (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Rice, 2016). The model suggested how the coach-teacher partnership should be established to ensure teacher learning and the sustainability of the newly suggested teaching strategies.

The commonplace idea that there is a gap in the literature of instructional coaching in the Malaysian context may seem less of a platitude because Mohamad, Rashid, Yunus and Zaid's (2016)'s study is a rare study that reviewed about instructional coaching. In the limited research on instructional coaching in the Malaysian context, Mohamad et al.'s (2016) study shed some light on the views of relationship building in coaching English language teachers. For coaching to be an effective form of teacher professional development (TPD), it is imperative to understand how the coaches, use and implement the partnership principles to enhance the acceptance of coaching support in their actual day-to-day practice.

The current study's focus is on discovering the possible relationship between: (a) the use of the Partnership Learning principles, as emphasised by Knight (2007) as significantly contributing to coach-teacher partnership (i.e. equality, dialogue, choice, voice, reflection, praxis and reciprocity); and (b) the process of establishing coach-teacher partnership in the local context of coaching English primary school English teachers in Malaysia.

1.1 Background to the Problem

This study aimed to investigate the coaches' use of the Partnership Learning principles to establish the coach-teacher partnership in the coaching interactions in the SISC+ coaching programme in East Malaysia. More specifically, the investigation was guided by Knight's (2007) instructional coaching model, which identified the seven Partnership Learning principles in coaching interactions to build on the coach-teacher relationship.

1.1.1 Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

Education in the 21st century requires changes in the role and functioning of schools and so is what is expected of teachers. In October 2011, the Malaysian Ministry of Education launched a comprehensive review of the education system in Malaysia in order to develop a new National Education Blueprint (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2012). This decision was made in the context of the increasingly high international education standards, the transformation in the government's aspiration to better preparing Malaysia's children to meet the needs of the 21st century, and the increased public and parental expectations of the education policy. To keep abreast with the challenges of the 21st century, the education reform sheds light on developing

teacher professional development activities to bring about sustained and effective teacher learning.

Henceforth, researchers are continually seeking clarity about how to develop in-service teacher professionalism. Improving the effectiveness of TPD for teachers is one of the important measures undertaken by the Malaysian Education Ministry in its prevalent effort to enhance the quality of teaching (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2012, p.5-2). In-service training could prepare teachers for the challenges they will face throughout the teaching career by positively influencing student achievement and improving teaching practices. TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) found that the percentage of teachers who underwent professional development activities (96.6%) was well above the average (88.4%) for Malaysia (OECD, 2013). TALIS also suggested that participation in professional development activities had been promising. Over 90% of teachers reported that they spent approximately ten days each year on professional development, which was more than the Ministry-mandated requirement of seven days per year (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2012, p.5-5).

The great demand in professional development was also perceived in studies on Malaysian in-service English teachers (Kabilan & Veratharaju, 2013; Khandehroo, Mukundan & Alavi, 2011). In line with the education reform under the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025, the English Language Roadmap 2015 – 2025 is an English language-based reform that focuses on the English language initiative to ensure that every child is proficient in English. Under the English Language Roadmap 2015 – 2025, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was adopted in Malaysia in 2013 (Uri & Aziz, 2017) as the standard language proficiency benchmarking to adopt in the government's effort to promote and strengthen the English language proficiency among Malaysian students. The government body that

is known as the English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) set out to elevate the standard of English through the alignment of the Malaysia's English language curriculum and assessments with the CEFR. According to the CEFR benchmarking, primary school students, at the end of their primary schooling, are expected to achieve A2 level whereby they would be able to communicate with developing proficiency in English. The teachers' English proficiency is also benchmarked using the CEFR and they are expected to achieve at least C1 or to be highly-proficient in the English language (Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2016). This move certainly poses new dilemmas to English teachers because the goal of enhancing students' English proficiency would require the upskilling of teachers' skills in the subject matter and pedagogical-content knowledge to enhance teaching quality to produce students who are up-to-par with the CEFR targets. The current study has focused on the TPD or more specifically, the instructional coaching on the English subject since the English teachers are facing with greater challenges in achieving the aspirations within the English language education reform in Malaysia.

Despite the high need and active participation in professional training, the Ministry's past initiatives to improve teacher quality through professional development seem to lack effectiveness. A review of the literature revealed teachers' negative perception towards teacher professional training and the low effectiveness of in-service teacher training and upskilling (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Knight, 2007; Nguyen, 2011; Petras, Jamil & Mohamed, 2012; Zein, 2017). The key indicator for the ineffectiveness in TPD is the low percentage of participants who demonstrate understanding of the knowledge, demonstrate newly learnt skills in a training setting and use new skills in the classroom settings (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Successful TPD programmes are sustained over time, collaborative, focused on the content to be taught,

and provide multiple opportunities for classroom application (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Another reason for TPD ineffectiveness is the practice of conventional professional development. Conventional training is widely criticized as being ineffective in providing teachers with sufficient time, activities and content necessary for increasing teacher's knowledge and fostering meaningful changes in their classroom practice (Broad & Evans, 2006; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Kwang, 2001; Louca, Tzialli, Skoulia & Constantinou, 2012; Qablan, Mansour, Alshamrani, Aldahamash & Sabbah, 2015; Thakral, 2011). Traditional professional development is characterised by top-down remediation approaches to fix teachers (Netolicky, 2016; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). The traditional training is usually in the form of courses or workshops and education conferences or seminars that expects passive teacher-listeners and presents unrelated topics to the training needs of the teachers (Hawley & Valli, 1999). On the other hand, effective professional development is characterised by "on-going, long-term, relevant to the teachers' content area and creates job-embedded learning" (Zepeda, 2012, p.8).

Education systems therefore seek to provide opportunities for more effective in-service professional development. A considerable body of literature has emerged on a newly reformed, high-quality professional development known as instructional coaching (e.g. Kraft, Blazar & Hogan, 2016). The findings on the literature review on instructional coaching show that it is a highly-promising extension to professional development in at least five areas: (a) improving student learning (Akhavan, 2011; Kraft et al., 2016; Shidler, 2008); (b) to improve teacher efficacy (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Kane, 2009; Scurry, 2010); (c) to promote changes in teacher autonomy (Castillo, 2011; Houston, 2015; Knight & Cornett, 2008; Mohamad et al., 2016;

Spelman, Bell, Thomas & Briody, 2016); and (d) to improve teacher collaboration (Doby-Holmes, 2011). The outcomes of instructional coaching will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1.1.2 Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching is identified as high-quality professional development because it reflects these five features of effective TPD, namely, (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence activities, (d) sustained duration and (e) collective participation (Desimone & Pak, 2017). The coaches meet the teachers on a one-on-one and face-to-face basis to provide content-focused support that is uniquely suited for teachers' learning. The teachers are involved in active learning because instead of passively listening to the lectures in traditional professional development, the teachers would be involved in actively reflecting and receiving feedback from the coaches during the pre-observation conferences, classroom observations and post-observation conferences. The knowledge-sharing from the coaches would be consistent with the teachers' learning goals and state-wide curriculum implementations. Moreover, coaching is not a one-off process. Rather, the coaches have on-going weekly or monthly discussion with their coached teachers in schools. Coaching involves collective participation of the coaches and teachers constantly interacting with each other to build a common understanding on school improvement endeavours. Instructional coaching presents itself as a new paradigm in TPD that could perhaps address issues related to TPD such as providing individualised and differentiated professional development practice.

1.1.2(a) Coaching Programme in Malaysia

In the Malaysian context, the School Improvement Specialist Coach Plus (SISC+), or hereafter referred to as the coaches, are placed in the respective district education offices through the District Transformation Programme (DTP) under the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012). Wave 1 (2013 – 2015) of the reform under the Malaysian Education Blueprint focused on improving the curriculum and preparing for structural change by intensifying support systems for teachers to improve delivery of the curriculum. Through Wave 1 of the education reform, instructional coaches are introduced to low-performing schools which are categorised as Bands 5, 6 or 7 (based on the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) school performance band, a national measurement to report on school progress). These coaches work as full-time teacher professional learning developers for different schools, especially in the under-performing and rural schools in the district education offices that they are attached to. This is to ensure that teachers could receive the appropriate coaching support to align their classroom teaching with the written curriculum (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012). It is expected that through the introduction of coaches in schools, the number of tiers involved in rolling out changes to the curriculum and assessment system could be reduced and on-the-ground TPD could be provided to in-service teachers. The mobilisation of qualified coaches to disadvantaged schools is critical to bridge the high and low performing schools and urban-rural gap.

As specified in the DTP 3.0 Management Guidelines, coaches provide teacher support in terms of pedagogy, assessment and curriculum (School Management Division, 2017). At the beginning of the coaching initiatives, coaches were expected to provide subject-based support to the teachers particularly in core subjects of Bahasa

Melayu, English Language, Mathematics and Science (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2012). In 2017, the ministry reviewed the role of the coaches as subject-based pedagogical coaches to pedagogical experts across all subjects (Education Ministry Annual Report, 2016). There are four main areas of responsibilities of coaches according to the DTP 3.0 Management Guideline: (a) 60% of providing coaching face-to-face support and discussions, (b) 20% of providing TPD and professional learning community (PLC) networking, (c) 15% of reporting, post-mortem actions and teacher interventions, (d) 5% of administrative work under the jurisdiction of the district education office. Having the coaches to support English language teachers is one of the most recent efforts taken by the Malaysian government (Mohamad et al., 2016) to provide teachers the avenues to improve the quality of their teaching and learning through coaching by the coaches (Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2015). For the purpose of this study, English language coaching was focused to explore the coaching interactions in terms of coach-teacher partnership building.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although many studies have highlighted the promise of instructional coaching in contributing to teacher change and school improvement, scholars have reported that teachers are not always receptive towards coaching support due to three main reasons: (a) teachers' resistance towards classroom observations (Mohamad et al., 2016; Wragg, 2002); (b) teachers' resistance towards the teaching innovations being shared by their coaches (Chiola, 2015; Jacobs, Boardman, Potvin & Wang, 2018); and (c) teachers' resistance in accepting coaches' feedback (Jacobs et al., 2018; Kho, Saeed & Mohamed, 2019; Zimmerman, 2006). When teachers' practices are placed under scrutiny, this places the teachers under a vulnerable state to be commented upon on

their lesson plans, teaching delivery and the decisions that they make in employing the strategies and activities in their lessons. This vulnerability, which might manifest into teacher resistance, can be turned positive for the teachers if coaches are able to engage teachers in coaching interactions in which both parties could trust and feel safe in sharing thoughts and ideas with each other (Hunt, 2016). However, some coaches were unaware of the teachers' resistance, how coaches could embrace the resistance and learn how to work with it (Chiola, 2015; Reilly, 2014). Building relationship with the teachers, albeit challenging to most of the coaches (Chiola, 2015) would be argued to be necessary to inspire growth and change in teachers. This proposed study is to contribute to the body language based on how coaches could allow effective coaching to take place by employing their skills (e.g. interpersonal skills, coach-teacher partnership building skills).

There is a tremendous need for aligning the coaching expectations, as stipulated in the official coaching guidelines, of “(building) rapport with the teachers” with the actual day-to-day coaching practice (School Management Division, 2017, p.28). Research has repeatedly advocated building relationships or coach-teacher partnerships as the key ingredient to coaching effectiveness (e.g. Haan, Grant, Burger & Eriksson, 2016). While the coaches are highly encouraged to create good coach-teacher relationships, “building rapport” is not well-defined in the coaching guidelines. The coaching process takes time and involves getting to know the teachers (Pletcher, 2015) through conducting pre-observation conferences, classroom observations, post-observation conferences and other coaching interventions when necessary with the teachers (School Management Division, 2017). The coaching guidelines also pointed out “building rapport” should be built with the teachers before the coaching process

but did not shed light on how the coaches should maintain the relationships as the coaching process progresses.

Despite the laudable efforts in introducing the coaching programmes to schools and the development of a national framework for coaching to enhance students' achievement in Malaysia, there is still a lack of research and evidence-based models specifically designed to address the most critical area of coaching which is in the coach-teacher partnership building. In the initial stages of introducing coaching to schools, the national framework of coaching has been very useful in giving general guidelines in how coaching should be implemented. However, to enhance the coaching effectiveness, and consistent practice, research-based theoretically supported coaching model is needed (Knight & Nieuwerburgh, 2012), especially on how coaches could employ coaching skills to structure their coaching interactions. A clear coaching model is imperative to give structure to the coaching interactions to encourage coach-teacher partnership especially in the local context of coaching. As much as 60% of the coaching would be invested on face-to-face coaching interactions in which the coaches and the teachers would be engaged in professional dialogues on improving classroom practices (School Management Division, 2017). During coaching, the coaches need to provide tailored training to the teachers and communicate instant feedback based on the classroom observations (School Management Division, 2017). In other words, the coaches' work encompasses having constructive interactions, especially with the teachers. However, the nuances of the coach-teacher interactions tend to be overlooked or taken lightly because the coaches are expected to be inherently competent in their interpersonal skills. This could be one of the many reasons that coaching guidelines lack clear guidelines on establishing rapport. The process of coaching is continuous and on-going and thus, the coaches would not only need a coaching model on how to

build coach-teacher relationships, but also to structure the meaningful rapport in coaching interactions.

As stated in the abovementioned discussion, the seven Partnership Learning principles as proposed by Knight (2007) could provide possible illumination on how coaches go about developing the partnership process in coach-teacher relationship and are viewed as the core element in ensuring the effectiveness of instructional coaching. However, it is still questionable about how the model could be adapted in the Malaysian context and the extent of the coaches' and teachers' awareness of using the Partnership Learning model to develop coach-teacher partnership (Vikaraman, Mansor & Hamzah, 2017). Joyce and Showers (1981) found that although there is a multitude of coaching models available that share several key characteristics, no one set of features defines all coaching models. As observed in one of the many past Malaysian initiatives in TPD known as Buddy Support System, research found that the impact of the implementation of the effectiveness was only at the mediocre level (Abdullah, Alzaidiyeen & Seedee, 2010). In the case of instructional coaching, if the teachers resist coaching, there would not be coaching at all and the government's vision of enhancing TPD and producing better teaching quality through coaching support would again fall short.

The teachers' point of view in the topic of coach-teacher partnership building tends to be overlooked (Mohamad et al., 2016). Yet, considering the teachers' perspective could lead to better understanding on how to improve the coaching programme to deliver the best impact on school improvement. The Malaysian Education Annual Report asserted the need to accord coaching and capacity building to teachers (Education Performance & Delivery Unit PADU, 2018) but did not

highlight how coach-teacher partnership could be developed based on the teachers' voices and needs. The perspectives of the stakeholders in coaching need to be scrutinised to facilitate further comparison with regards to coaching (Mohamad et al., 2016). By comparing the perspective of the coaches and the teachers in Partnership Learning principles which are the more prominent to the less prominent could be identified, the context-adaptability of the coaching model in partnership building could be determined. Reaching out to the teachers, and also the coaches on how partnership is built could help perspective-coordinating, improve the ability of decision making in coaching and widen perspectives on the adoption of the Partnership Learning principles.

The current coaching guidelines lack comprehensible instructions in supporting coaches in their collaborative work with English language teachers in both urban and rural areas. According to PADU (2018), the English language remains as the main factor which contributes towards the achievement gaps between the urban and rural areas, especially in East Malaysia. It poses a greater challenge for the English language subject coaches due to the increasing number of English innovations being introduced to the curriculum, and the urban and rural English achievement gap. The findings that schools in the rural areas have fewer number of English language option teachers and the inability to fill up the required number of SISC+ positions have resulted in a less coach-teacher partnership support provided to rural schools (PADU, 2018).

Up to this point, it is clarified that first, although the effectiveness of instructional coaching hinges on relationship building, coaches have not received enough guidelines on how the coach-teacher partnership could be established (Knight,

2007); second, to enhance the coaching partnership, a research-based and theoretically supported coaching model is needed (Knight & Nieuwerburgh, 2012); third, , local teacher education researchers are reaching out to find out how coaching models could meet the coaching needs in our various socio-cultural contexts (Vikaraman, et al., 2017); fourth, the best ways of how coaching partnership could be developed are the ones not only extracted from the coaches' perspectives but also the teachers' views (Mohamad et al., 2016); and fifth, there is a need in extending comprehensible instructions in supporting coaches in their collaborative work with English language teachers in the effort in reducing the student performance gap between the urban and rural areas (PADU, 2018). Based on these points, the present research aimed to answer these questions: (a) Are the coaches or teachers aware of the use of Partnership Learning principles in partnership building?; (b) What Partnership Learning principles were being used in the coaches' actual practice in the Malaysian context?; (c) What were the other ways of coach-teacher relationship building not mentioned in the seven Partnership Learning principles adopted in the Malaysian context?; and (d) Which Partnership Learning principle was the most or least practiced in the coaching interactions? The main focus of this study shed light on the Partnership Learning principles used by the Malaysian coaches that could be facilitating or debilitating coach-teacher partnership. These principles, to the best of the researcher's knowledge have not been studied to date. In ensuring instructional coaching could become a highly impactful professional development programme, it is important for this research to focus on how the coach-teacher relationship or more specifically instructional partnership could be developed.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

The findings of the study are important in the sense that it helps to clarify the misconceptions that surround the actual definition of instructional coaching and coach-teacher partnership building that are challenging the effectiveness of the coaching initiatives as a high quality TPD. Misconception towards instructional coaching still exists whereby coaching is misunderstood as a form of surveillance on the teachers' practice rather than as a form of support. Even so when the supportive nature of coaching is understood, in what ways these supports could be given to the teachers remain unclear (Netolicky, 2016). In recent years researchers begin to investigate the relationship building between the coaches and teachers (Anderson et al., 2014; Crowell, 2015; Townsend, 2016) however, works on how relationship building could affect the success of instructional coaching remain premature. For that reason, it is pivotal that research on this specific area which is partnership building in the broad subject of instructional coaching is placed under scrutiny.

Although some research has been done locally to give a glimpse of coaching in the Malaysian context on the views of the coaches on their roles in coaching (Mohamad et al., 2016), research on this relatively new instructional coaching implementation is still lacking. This study is carried out in order to add to the growing yet 'immature' research on the process of building partnership in instructional coaching. This study is interested in what makes coaching relationships thrive, what makes coaching relationships fail and how coaches foster partnership building between coaches and the coached teachers.

The importance to conduct this research is that it allows instructional coaches to have an in-depth understanding on the principles behind their practice in terms of

partnership building in the coaching process. Instructional coaching professional development models are used widely in the school environments, but little research has focused on the coach's active process of coaching (Stepp, 2014). There are still many questions in the study of instructional coaching for school improvement that merit further exploration (Mohamad et al., 2016). The study of coaching as a method for developing quality teachers is becoming more imperative.

This study encourages coaches to reflect on their work and to improve coaching by creating healthy coach-teacher relationships. The study provides opportunities for English language teachers to think about instructional coaching as a means of TPD and how they could embrace coaching to improve their classroom practice. Most importantly, practitioners would embrace that “coaching works best when teachers are collaborating with a coach because they want to, not because they are forced to” (Knight, 2009, p.19). To have positive interactions between the instructional coaches and the teachers, and for learning to occur and to be sustained, a good partnership building involving the instructional coaches and the coached teachers needs to be established.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the instructional coaches' use of the partnership learning principles to develop a coach-teacher partnership in the SISC+ coaching programme in East Malaysia. More specifically, the investigation was guided by Knight's (2007) instructional coaching model, which identified the Seven Partnership Learning Principles (PLP) in coaching interactions in coach-teacher partnership building. This study hoped to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) to explore the anticipated principles (as listed within the Partnership Learning principles) that are being used based on Knight's principles (2007)
- (ii) to investigate any other (unanticipated) Partnership Learning principles being used between the coach and the teachers in the coaching process that are not listed in Knight's principles (2007)
- (iii) to determine the principles that:
 - a. are more prominent in the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the coaches
 - b. are more prominent in the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the teachers
 - c. are less prominent in the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the coaches
 - d. are less prominent in the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the teachers

1.5 Research Questions

While acknowledging there are a range of principles in the coaching process, this study set out to address the following research questions in relation to the Partnership Learning principles:

RQ1: What are the anticipated principles and how are they being used to build coach-teacher partnership in the coaching process?

RQ2: What is the unanticipated principle and how are they being used to build coach-teacher partnership in the coaching process?

RQ3: What are the principles that could contribute more to the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the coaches? Why?

RQ4: What are the principles that could contribute more to the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the teachers? Why?

RQ5: What are the principles that could contribute less to the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the coaches? Why?

RQ6: What are the principle that could contribute less to the coach-teacher partnership from the perspective of the teachers? Why?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The present study on how the coach-teacher relationship is established based on the seven Partnership Learning principles in coaching interactions in the SISC+ coaching initiatives will help to understand and learn how to better establish and maintain relationships with teachers. Because of the difference in communication between two dissimilar people, in this case, between the coaches and the teachers, misunderstandings could happen which could ruin the coach-teacher relationship. When the coach-teacher relationships are damaged, the coaching interventions could not be carried on because coaching relies heavily on the interaction between the coaches and the teachers, as described in the previous sections. This study hopes to provide the guidelines on how the coach-teacher relationship could be developed to decrease tension and improve coaching effectiveness.

This study is significant as it hopes to contribute to the limited literature on the Malaysian instructional coaching programme as a professional development method for English language teachers, to look deeper into the process of coaching as well as giving qualitative evidence on building partnerships that make changes possible in the teachers' practice. If the success of coaching work depends on how coaches could manage their relationships with teachers, as some researchers have suggested (Heineke, 2013), it would be imperative that the areas where coaches can strengthen their interactions with teachers be identified, monitored and assessed by stakeholders such as coaching programme administrators and DTP state coordinators.

In addition to filling the literature gap in context-specific instructional coaching process, this study addresses the knowledge gap in terms of the coaches and teachers' roles in instructional coaching, especially, the roles that they play in partnership building. In their two-year research project, undertaken by the Research Centre for Learning and Teaching at Newcastle University, Lofthouse, Leat and Towler (2010) revealed that if all stakeholders recognise the characteristics of coaching and the roles they play from one another's perspectives, it is more likely that coaching will succeed. This study stands to offer information and support for the coaches, teachers, coaching co-ordinators, school leaders and educators. By understanding how all parties perceive themselves within the instructional coaching programme, coaches and teachers, can become more empowered to influence school improvement.

Besides contributing in the knowledge and literature gap with regards to coaching, this study hopes to uncover other principles that are not stipulated in the list of Knight's seven PLP. The list of principles is by no means exhaustive or definitive

(Knight, 2007). As instructional coaches reflect on their coaching experiences, there might be other principles that they would choose to adopt because these principles work for them under different contexts and unique circumstances. The same principles which may have been effective in partnership building with one teacher may not produce the same effect with another teacher. This study offers insights into the conditions facilitating the existing Partnership Learning principles (Knight, 2007) and adds to the existing principles with other principles which are practiced in the context-specific conditions of the coaching process.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Anticipated Principles. The term “anticipated principles” is used to mean “the principles which enable partnership building to occur based on the Knight’s (2007) seven Partnership Learning principles: Equality, Choice, Voice, Dialogue, Reflection, Praxis and Reciprocity”.

Coaching Process. The process of supporting the teachers under the coaching programme in terms of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (School Management Division, 2017) which would take place in the classroom (lesson observation) and outside the classroom (pre-conference and post-conference discussions).

Coaching Session. The pre-observation conference and post-observation conference being conducted between the coach and the teacher to discuss on pedagogical matters.

Coach-teacher Partnership. The working alliance established between coaches and teachers (Haan et al., 2016). In this study, the partnership refers to the

relationship between the coaches and the teachers which enables coach-teacher collaborations to take place.

Debriefing. The discussion which is conducted between the coach and the teacher after a classroom observation. The main goal of this conference is to discuss the teacher's lesson which is presented in the classroom observation. Debriefing shares the same definition as post-observation conference.

Dyad. A coaching relationship which consists of a coach and a teacher.

Instructional Coach. An individual who “provides intensive, differentiated support to teachers so that they are able to implement proven practices” (Knight, 2009, p.30). The main goal of an instructional coach is to help teachers to improve teaching practices which would have a positive impact towards student learning and school improvement. In this study, the term “instructional coach” is also used to refer to the SISC+ in the Malaysian context.

Instructional Coaching. Instructional coaching is the act of working in partnership as a job-embedded professional learning opportunity for teachers (DePasquale, 2015). For the purposes of this study, instructional coaching is defined as content-based (Primary School English Language subject) and intended to support teachers in meeting the aims of school-based or district-based instructional reform.

Partnership Building. The coach's efforts in interacting with the teachers that lead to relationship building to create positive coach-teacher relationship. Partnership building is based on Knight's (2007) seven Partnership Learning principles. The principles guide the coach interactions with the teachers in building on the coach-

teacher relationship. In this study, the term refers to the relationship between the coach and teacher in how they work and collaborate professionally.

Partnership Learning Principles. Partnership Learning Principles (PLP) are the important “principles behind Instructional Coaching” in which coaching is “a partnership between coaches and teachers” (Knight, 2008, p.31; Knight, 2007, p.36). The practice of Partnership Learning Principles in instructional coaching encourages coach-teacher collaborations so teachers could choose and implement interventions to help students learn more effectively. Partnership Learning constitutes of seven core principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis and reciprocity.

1.8 Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

The following assumptions were made in this study. The instructional coaches and teachers were truthful in giving their responses. The instructional coaches received training in the model of coaching being implemented in the district. The instructional coaching programme was implemented with fidelity by the district education office participated in this study.

This study was limited in the following ways. Discussions and conclusions for this study are based upon self-report measures that may or may not truly reflect of instructional coaching practice. The sample size was limited due to delimitations of exploring the partnership building of four coach-teacher relationships as well as being limited to only drawing samples from East Malaysia that have implemented instructional coaching as a model of professional development. This study does not intend to make comparisons to the effectiveness of other forms of coaching or teacher professional development.

Several delimitations provided parameters for this study. The participants came from East Malaysia that have used instructional coaching as a model of professional development for at least three years. This study determines the coach-teacher partnership building of the English language coach and teachers who are teaching the primary school English subject as the scope of this study. Coaching for other subjects besides English and secondary school coaching are not included in the explanatory portion of the study. This study does not evaluate the quality of the district coaching programme and only focus on the process of coaching in the district level coaching implementation.

1.9 A Brief Summary of the First Chapter

This study is described in the following chapters. Chapter 1 begins with the introduction of the importance of teacher professional development to enhance teacher practice for improvement of the schools and student achievement. However, traditional professional development does not seem to work. The transfer of skill and knowledge shared during professional development to teacher's daily practices is not taking place. There is a gap between teachers' daily practice and research validated strategies that are introduced during professional trainings. Instructional coaching is a relatively new method of professional development which provides job-embedded, on-site training that offers school-level professional development to address the real needs of the teachers to the areas that they need help with. The implementation of instructional coaching is not without its own set of challenges: teachers' resistance from being coached, change of teaching practices is not taking place and so forth. Knight (2007) proposed the 7 PLP which serves as a foundation aspect of successful coaching to enhance the coach-teacher relationship to create a space conducive for

professional learning to occur. Chapter 1 further illuminates the research questions, significance of the study, rationale of the study, assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study and lastly a brief summary of this chapter.