

## Understanding Teachers' Anxiety towards the Coaching Programme

Zubaidah Bibi Mobarak Ali<sup>1</sup>, Hamidah Yamat<sup>2</sup>, Wahiza Wahi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Faculty of Education, National University of Malaysia (UKM), <sup>3</sup>Pusat Citra Universiti, National University of Malaysia (UKM)

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v10-i7/7618> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v10-i7/7618

Published Date: 11 July 2020

### Abstract

Focused on remodelling instructional practices, the teacher coaching programme anticipates School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+ or SIS Coach/es) to collaborate with teachers, to observe their teachings, to model best practices and to engage them in reflective thought-provoking discussions. As this is not a norm, teachers often receive the suggestion of coaching with mixed feelings. Research proves that the way teachers comprehend and react towards the coaching programme can be a hindrance to its projection. In this qualitative multiple-case study, we sought to understand better the factors that lead to teachers' anxiety towards the coaching programme. Three SIS Coaches and nine teachers' coaching experiences show that three factors led to teachers' anxiety when they were initially approached to work with the SIS Coach in the coaching programme. Fear, a well-known enemy of progress and success, prompts constant misunderstandings of the job and accountabilities of an SIS Coach. Thus, recognising and following up on teachers' reactions from the earliest starting point can advance the rest of the coaching nature.

**Keywords:** School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+), Coaching, Teacher, Anxiety, Qualitative.

### Introduction

Implementing change in the education system is vital, but it is also fraught with obstacles, barriers and challenges which can hinder the impact and desired change to happen. With the vision of bringing a change in the English language (EL) teaching and learning standards of the country, in the year 2014, the teacher coaching programme was introduced across schools in Malaysia (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). The programme functions as a model for improving student achievement by redesigning the way teachers teach. It requires a teacher to collaborate with the School Improvement Specialist Coach Plus (SISC+) (hereafter termed as SIS Coach/es) to reflect and communicate professionally about their classroom practices in a way that is individualised with one-on-one sessions, where teachers have to make time for coaching sessions during their working hours, receive coaching over an extended time and make necessary instructional changes (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). How willing

are teachers to commit to this process is highly questionable (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 1997).

Henceforth, there is a need to anticipate the distractors and obstacles to a seamless rollout of the teacher coaching initiative. Gallucci and associates (2010) stated that some anticipated and unseen issues regularly emerge when coaches begin working with teachers to support their skills and learning. This study focused on front-line individuals who seem to provide incredibly unique insights into the implementation of the teacher coaching programme: the SIS Coaches and coached teachers. Gaining insight from them serve as an indicator in approaching the coaching programme differently as it is indeed to be known as a complicated practice to implement (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Deussen, Coskie, Robinson, & Autio, 2007; King et al., 2009; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2016).

At the outset, it is significant to note that the goal of this study is learning from the teachers for insight and understanding rather than manipulation. No matter what the initiative, if it is not communicated, planned and integrated carefully, it can leave teachers confused, frustrated and overwhelmed (Tung, Ouimette, & Feldman, 2004). Hence, policymakers and education authorities need to realise the extent to which teachers' anxiety towards teacher coaching can cause teachers to be under higher intense resistance towards change.

Through semi-structured interviews and observations, this multiple-case qualitative research provided a voice to the SIS Coaches and teacher participants to discuss the issue at hand – the factors for teachers' anxiety towards the coaching programme (Given, 2008). Implications of this research suggest that the inceptive step of a teacher coaching programme should start by recognising and following up on teachers' anxiety or in other words, how teachers react towards the programme and towards working with an SIS Coach.

## **Literature Review**

### **Teacher Coaching Programme in Malaysia**

In 2014, the Malaysian Ministry of Education mandated strategies to raise teacher effectiveness (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). The District Education Offices or *Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah (PPD)* were empowered to customise academic assistance required by teachers and schools (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). This involved the recruitment of full-time teacher coaches termed as School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (hereafter SIS Coaches). The SIS Coaches are placed in the *PPD* so that they can spend 60% of their time providing teachers with intensive, job-embedded, on-the-ground continuous professional development (CPD) through the teacher coaching programme (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013). They do not have any teaching responsibilities as they are required to give teachers more prominent, more straightforward in-situ ongoing support to raise the level of teachers' professionalism and classroom teaching and learning. The teacher coaching programme is a strategy to raise teaching standards by enhancing teachers' knowledge and skill, in understanding and executing the latest education reforms, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment strategies; which has turned to be a favourable structure of teachers' CPD across many countries' education spectrum (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011; Knight, 2007; Matsumura, Garnier, Correnti, Junker, & DiPrima Bickel, 2010). The teacher coaching programme administered by the SIS Coach focusses mainly on low-performing schools intending to progress instructional practices among teachers that will enhance students' performance and ultimately work towards transforming the entire school (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013).

SIS Coaches are employed among the *guru cemerlang* or master teachers and senior teachers who have demonstrated mastery of content and pedagogy with excellent experience in schools (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015). As experts, they are expected to collaborate with teachers to support reflection about students, the curriculum, and pedagogy (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015). Despite their designation as experts, the SIS Coaches role is non-supervisory. They do not evaluate teachers to determine performance-based authorisation or promotion. Therefore, the SIS Coach is characterised as an expert or a knowledgeable professional in the education field whose essential expert duty is to bring and share research-proven instructional practices into the classroom by working with teachers (adults) rather than students (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015). The SIS Coach may spend some time working with groups of teachers besides individual teachers and administer other relevant duties as instructed by the *PPD* Directors (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015).

Selection of schools to coach was made through district-level meetings (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015). Once schools were identified, the SIS Coaches start to identify underperforming teachers based on the principals' suggestions or the grades gained during classroom observations by the school administrators or the respective education inspectorates using the teacher evaluation instrument or *Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia (SKPM)* (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015). As the selection gets completed, the SIS Coaches execute their coaching activities. They are required to visit and monitor the schools and teachers under their charge at least three times a year. Bi-weekly performance dialogues are held in their respective *PPDs* reporting the outcomes, challenges and needs (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015). They establish a trusting relationship with teachers by maintaining their status as peers. The focal point of the collaborative sustained job-embedded coaching sessions will be on the coached teachers' mastery of classroom practices that will boost students' performance (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013).

### Teacher Resistance

Following these few years of the execution of this teacher coaching program, SIS Coaches have been promoting an active role in supporting EL teachers across the country, so that they can impact the academic success of students. However, when SIS Coaches went down to schools, they faced resistance from the teachers with whom they intended to collaborate (Ng et al. 2014). Although the SIS Coaches tried to throw light on, the teachers were still unhappy and intimidated whenever SIS Coach visited their classrooms (Ahmad Syahiran, Radzuwan, Kamariah, & Safawati Basirah, 2016). As defined in the Guidebook, SIS Coaches need to conduct regular classroom visits to provide in-class coaching sessions by debriefing teachers to reflect on the lessons and plan intervention strategies (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2015, 2017). Neither of these classroom visits is meant to discredit nor assess teachers, but such kind of visits have never been practised in Malaysian schools. The norm is where school inspectorates, head of departments, senior assistants or principals would enter a teacher's class to assess them using the competency and performance-based teacher evaluation instrument (*SPI Bil. 3/1987*). Henceforth, although the SIS Coaches are not working as evaluators, it is hard to shed the evaluative feel of any formal classroom observation. As a result, teachers in Malaysia are unhappy whenever they get to know someone may be walking into their classes even if it is the SIS Coach, as they often perceive visits like these as an evaluation process (Eow, 2015).

In a semi-structured interview carried out with two SIS Coaches, one of the SIS Coach said that "*teachers started to feel anxious when they know someone is coming to their classroom*"

(Syahiran et al. 2016:266); another SIS Coach added that “*sometimes there are teachers who have a ‘negative attitude’ when it comes to change*” (Syahiran et al. 2016:267). These responses imply that although coaching is believed to have a potential in supporting teachers to make changes to their practice in a non-threatening manner by facilitating reflection (Knight, 2009a), there are yet numerous teachers who have not embraced the culture of wanting to receive valid criticism for continuous improvement (Britton & Anderson 2010). The relationship seems to be more complicated than expected. Scholars concurred that working one-on-one with teachers and guiding conversations about teachers’ instructional practice have always been most challenging (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2009b; Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2002).

Why were the teachers sceptical? Were SIS Coaches role not clearly defined or the SIS Coaches themselves were not capable of building relationships with the teachers? The difficulties encountered in the execution of the teacher coaching programme primarily in the context of Malaysia, the substance of it and the teachers’ acceptance to work alongside with an SIS Coach remains to be a field that needs further exploration, (Siaw, Karwan, & Abdul Rashid, 2019).

## Methods

### The Participants

The data reported here were gathered from part of a larger multiple-case qualitative study which was carried out in seven months. The fieldwork was carried out in three different districts. Each district had one SIS Coach participant, and three coached EL teacher participants. The three SIS Coach participants were purposively chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study and because they have been appointed as SIS Coach since its inception in 2014. Each of these SIS Coaches was advised to choose any of their three EL teachers with whom to work during the study based on the prerequisite criterion of teaching experiences: veteran - above 20 years, 11 to 20 years, and, novice - 10 years and below, and that they have been collaborating with the SIS Coach in the coaching programme for at least a year. For this study, all the participants’ names are pseudonyms and the table below summarise them:

Table 1

#### *Preview of the participants*

Research Case	SIS Coach Participant	Coached EL Teacher Participant	Years of teaching experience
District A	Sofea (S1)	Shila (T1)	23
		Zetty (T2)	16
		Sarah (T3)	9
District B	Rose (S2)	Ima (T4)	28
		Ling (T5)	16
		Preeta (T6)	8
District C	Dianne (S3)	Fiza (T7)	21
		Kumary (T8)	19
		Aiza (T9)	2

### Data Collection

Several kinds of information were collected along a specific timeline within one school year to answer the research questions. It is important to note that this protocol was used as part of a larger study, and not all of the information collected is reported in the findings section. All the participants went through two individual face-to-face interview protocols which were conducted at two different phases of the data collection. Separate semi-structured interview protocols were developed for the SIS Coach and coached teachers. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-taped and transcribed. It should be emphasised that these codes are utilised to describe the interviews in the findings section: Interview 1 - Int.1; Interview 2 - Int.2.

Patton (1990) stated that observation data could lead to deeper understandings of the issue rather than interviewing alone. Hence, two rounds of classroom teaching and two episodes of post-conference coaching sessions were also observed with all the teacher-SIS Coach dyads. All the post-conference coaching sessions between the SIS Coach and the teachers were held immediately after the observed lessons. Field notes were taken during the observations. The post-conference coaching sessions were also audio-taped and transcribed.

### Coding

To identify the patterns and themes from this case study's data, the six steps in the thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was closely referred to, and the software ATLAS.ti version 8 was used to manage the data.

### Findings and Discussions

To address the research question on the factors for teachers' anxiety towards the coaching programme, we used thematic analysis which generated three main reasons: (1) misconception of SIS Coach role, (2) feeling of inadequacy and (3) burden or the myth that coaching is something else 'to do'. These supported the reality that the culture of fear existed among the teachers when they were initially approached to work around in the coaching programme with the SIS Coach (Douglas, 2014), which makes teacher buy-in unattainable for the SIS Coaches if it is not addressed accordingly (Chval et al., 2010; Gibson, 2005; Saphier & West, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010).

#### ***Theme 1: The misconception of SIS Coach role***

The first broad factor for teachers' anxiety towards the coaching programme shows that the SIS Coach is an often-confused role among educators (Borman & Feger, 2006; Chval et al., 2010; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2010). For instance, during their initial visits to schools, all the three SIS Coaches (Sofea, Rose and Dianne) encountered the teachers associating them with the inspectorates who frequently go to classes to assess teachers. Sofea shared one example where the teacher she was to work with was so agitated during her first visit to the school. The teacher had lots to ask, "*Are you going to sit at the back? Are you going to give us [the] marks? Are you going to tell the officer? Are you going to tell the boss?*" (S1\_Int.1). Through questions like these, Sofea was able to sense the anxiety teachers had regarding her role. She realised that the teachers were not seeing her as a person who is there to help them in their personal growth; instead, they saw her as an evaluator "*like the inspectorates, and that really scared them.*" (S1\_Int.1). Rose said that she had to

communicate her role repetitively and it took quite a while for them to understand her coaching intentions, “...it took quite some time and even a year or two for some of the teachers to understand that I am there to help them and not to observe them.” (S2\_Int.1).

Six out of the nine teacher participants (Shila, Zetty, Ima, Preeta, Ling and Aiza) perceived the role of an SIS Coach to be associated with the inspectorates as well as related the SIS Coach being situated as an expansion of the PPD organisation (Douglas, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Recollecting the past, Shila said that at first, when she was informed about coaching, she was apprehensive and pessimistic. “*The concern, the worry and the fear*” of being observed even created the doubt in her if the SIS Coach was “*the eyes or something like that*” (T1\_Int.1). Furthermore, the “*traumatic*” feeling immediately built “*a wall of defence*” in her (T1\_Int.1). When asked again on why she felt so, she said:

“...anybody from Jabatan (Education Department) itself the fear is there, PPD (District Education Office) or Jabatan any officer, inspectorate, of course, we feel very apprehensive....another worry, another person going to be sitting at the back there evaluating us” (T1\_Int.2).

Aiza revealed feeling “*intimidated*” because she felt that the SIS Coach was someone with “*a higher power*” or authority (T9\_Int.2). This shows that since the SIS Coaches are based in PPDs, and they do not have any teaching responsibilities, the teachers mistook them for the other PPD officers in bureaucracy, whose fundamental job is to screen schools and teachers’ progress. Positioning the SIS Coach in PPD seems to have reinforced this misperception. The SIS Coaches were placed in PPD so that they will have greater opportunities to spend time with teachers on coaching activities and work on long-term instructional improvement goals. However, this was not made transparent to the teachers. Thus, with 75% of the participants raising this finding, it is safe for this study to conclude that since the very beginning, there was lack of description and precise definition of the SIS Coaches’ role among the school administration and the teachers (Knight, 2007).

In a flashback to how the delivery was done, according to SIS Coaches, Sofea and Rose, back in 2014, their PPD Directors summoned all the school administrators for a briefing on the coaching programme where they were introduced, and their roles were also explained. They both found the explanation to be compelling. So, how was it cascaded to the teachers then? According to Shila, her school’s Head of the Department informed the teachers that the SIS Coach will be coming to school and told them not to have the fear as the SIS Coach will not be evaluating but guiding. Teachers were also requested to be cooperative and to act naturally. It is captivating though that despite such explanation, the teachers still had the fear, the misconception of SIS Coach role to be precise. When interrogated further, it disclosed that no explanation was given on why the SIS Coaches were placed in PPD and not schools. So, the teachers thought, “*she (the SIS Coach) will have the same role. To evaluate us without offering help, that was my first impression.*” (T2\_Int.2).

On the other hand, Rose said though the briefing was done, on her visits to schools, there were still some administrators who kept asking her, “*when are you coming for observation?*” (Rose\_Int.1). “*So, if even they the administrators cannot understand it, how then with the teachers.*”, cried Rose (S2\_Int.1). Her teachers’ voices proved Rose’s concern. Ima, the veteran, shared that the administration informed her that the SIS Coach would be coming to see her, but he did not explain anything else regarding the visit. Even Ling had a similar experience in her new school. The novice, Preeta commented that the senior assistant just told her that the SIS Coach will be coming to see the lesson plan, the activities and will be entering the class as well.

Likewise, Dianne stated that back in 2014, she and her group of colleagues went to the selected schools and conducted a short briefing with all the school administrators to introduce themselves and explain their intentions. There was even a dialogue session to clear all the doubts. However, then, Dianne felt despite the much effort put in; it did not hit the right target, the teachers. As a consequence of that, the principals started giving names of teachers whom they labelled as the 'problematic' ones – like those who had problems with attendance.

This shows that in all three districts, the lack of clarity concerning the SIS Coach role created teachers' fear of coaching. While PPD Directors held a clear notion of the SIS Coach role to the schools' administrators, many teachers reacted that their administrators did not clearly specify the SIS Coaches' role. Hence, it is crystal clear that there was a lack of comprehension regarding the SIS Coach role among the teachers and the heads themselves (Gallucci et al., 2010), causing them to feel that it is a punishment rather than a lifeline opportunity.

Notwithstanding, in echo to Rose's voice, *"I think the Ministry of Education (MoE) needs to make a clear vision and mission of this coaching programme. This will then avoid the numerous changes in the SIS Coach roles happening every year."* (S2\_Int.2); this study adamantly believe there is a need to have a clear understanding and framework of what exactly coaching is and is not among all constituents, as it can influence the success and failure of the coaching programme (Borman & Feger, 2006; Chval et al., 2010; Denton & Hasbrouck, 2009; Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight, 2007). Hence, suggesting that the depiction of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the teacher coaching programme to the schools needs to be revised, as that is the first and foremost crucial aspect to success the execution (Knight, 2007).

### ***Theme 2: Feeling of inadequacy***

The second theme for the factors associated with teachers' anxiety towards the coaching programme was the teachers' feeling of being inefficient. With a sum of 58%, two of three SIS Coaches felt this to be a factor to the teachers' fear and five of nine teachers (Shila, Zetty, Sarah, Preeta and Aiza) had such fear in them. It was pictured vividly in Sofea's sharing,

*"....some teachers they have this sceptical idea among them, that if you are the one chosen, you are the weak ones and what more that are rumours also stating that teachers are chosen based on their marks of SKPM (Teacher Evaluation Tool)."* (S1\_Int.2).

This excerpt indicates that when the focus of coaching is placed on low-performing schools, it creates misconception among teachers that they need to be 'fixed'. These schools were already highly scrutinised, so the idea of having an SIS Coach in the classrooms was just one more thing to make the teachers feel that they are inefficient in carrying out their responsibilities and that the SIS Coach is there to 'fix them up' (Feger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004; Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). In addition, when the process of teacher selection is based on their evaluation marks, it just preprends to their misconception. Hence, reasoning to the teachers' anxiety that if the SIS Coach visits them, then they must be lousy teachers (Zimmerman 2006). This deficit mindset runs to creating a culture of fear towards coaching among the teachers. Hence, suggesting that it is time to widen the focus of the coaching efforts to all schools and teachers and not only teachers in low-performing schools (Knight, 2015). Maybe then teachers would not label working with an SIS Coach as a punishment, creating brighter chances for effective partnership (Knight, 2009b).

Another interesting finding was that all the three novice teachers in this study (Sarah, Preeta and Aiza) had a fear of feeling inefficient. Recalling her initial experience, Sarah disclosed that there were rumours regarding visits by the SIS Coach. *“there were rumours saying that there will be observations done by the PPD officers and we have to be prepared for it and that they will be selecting the weak teachers.”* (T3\_Int.1). She admitted that the circulating story created the horror in her:

*“So, I felt that am I the weak one, am I that bad?...I was really scared because at that time I thought that the principal and the administrators were not satisfied with me and I am a weak teacher, and that is why they want the officer to look at me teaching first.”* (T3\_Int.1)

Sarah’s worry sounds alarming as if her concerns are not immediately addressed, it may lead to the failure of the teacher coaching programme and worse still leaving a demotivating impact on her. With all three novice teachers voicing this similar reason of anxiety, it is safe to conclude that there might be many such novice teachers out there in schools, agonising over the possibility that they lack classroom knowledge and skills. It can be concluded that the teacher training they received could not totally prepare them to face the reality of what is precisely happening down in schools as new initiatives are rolled continuously down (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Once they are in the classroom, they are all alone to handle the classroom challenges like the massive number of students from various racial, ethnic and financial backgrounds with different interests, abilities and proficiency (Kaur, 2017). These teachers need to be supported, and coaching is the key to it. Coaching might not be a remedy to be rehearsed upon so-called ‘inadequate teachers’, nevertheless, it is the sort of assistance that teachers need to remind them why and what they are teaching in the first place and help them progress in their profession (Aguilar, 2013; Knight, 2007). As expressed by Dianne in the interview,

*“I don’t see it as coaching problematic teachers. I see [us] as providing continuous professional development bringing to the teachers at the closest scale-like bringing home to them what is out there. Bringing it home to them and making sure it is implemented properly.”* (S3\_Int.2)

Therefore, it is vital to make coaching as a culture in every school so that it is not stigmatised mainly as punishment. It is also essential for PPD leaders to ensure that the SIS Coaches are not assigned to many schools (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). They should be given ample time to work in ongoing ways in one to three schools so that they would be able to create a substantive relationship not only with the teachers and administrators but also the students (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). Furthermore, they would also be able to frequent their visits to support effective learning as voiced by one of the teacher participants:

*“I think for the one-to-one coaching is should be at least around two months once. Only then we can refresh back our skills and not have such a long gap between one meeting and another. Then, maybe she can get to know the students better.”* (T7\_Int.2).

### **Theme 3: Burden or the myth that coaching is something else ‘to do’**

The senior teachers mainly uttered this third and final theme on factors to teachers’ fear towards the coaching programme. In the interview, Shila did grumble a little on the programmes initiated by the MoE saying:

*“...time is something that we don’t have as we are practically running with so many programmes in schools etc....With so many other preparations for programmes, we*



*have to compromise the quality of our materials that we are delivering to pupils. We are tired; we are not machines, you know.”* (T1\_Int.1)

Likewise, Preeta sighted, *“I am always out attending courses or workshops, or even I have lots of things to handle in the school...”* (T6\_Int.2). The reforms of the nations’ EL programme has placed more and more demands on EL teachers, such as the Strengthening the EL policy, adaption of the international standards of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and aspirations for the development of English language in MEB. It can be a sound reason why teachers see working with the SIS Coach as something else ‘to do’ (Douglas, 2014). Four of the teacher participants (Shila, Ima, Preeta and Fiza) felt such.

However, it appears compelling that all the veteran teachers (Shila, Ima and Fiza), felt coaching was an additional task. This feeling can also be due to their many roles and responsibilities in school, as Shila is the CEFR advisor of her school, Ima is the Head of the EL Panel and the only EL teacher in the school, and Fiza is the Head of Language Department. Since such designations require loads of their time and energy, they may fear that SIS Coach will assign them more things to do. It agrees with Achinstein and Ogawa (2006), who stated that other job-related responsibilities that are perceived to be more critical than the suggested changes could be a factor to resistance among teachers. Therefore, the SIS Coaches need to practice the right approach with the teachers that is to acknowledge them as experts of their content and students (Aguilar, 2016; Knight, 2019). They should not tell teachers what to do, but they should also not withhold any expertise they have that might support a teachers’ growth or the students’ learning (Knight, 2019). To strengthen the teachers’ abilities to reflect on their practices, whatever feedback given should be delivered in a way that sets the teachers up as experts (Johnson, Leibowitz, & Perret, 2017).

Alternatively, another reason why the senior teachers felt coaching to be burdening can be merely due to their attitude as to what Sofea vocalised, *“it is more towards ego actually [where they feel like they] have been teaching for thirty years [and they] don’t need that kind of help”* (S1\_Int.2). Rose concurred with this finding when she said that usually the “senior teachers” are the ones who are quite reluctant and this can be seen from *“their body language and expression”*; they are not keen to learn from the SIS Coach as they feel *“they are also experienced....and all this while what they have been doing have been working well”*, so *“they don’t need the new ideas”* (S2\_Int.2). It is also possible that after a long tenure in the classroom, these veteran experienced teachers may be uninterested in changing their methods and routines and thus less willing to embrace the highly specified nature of coaching (Zimmerman, 2006).

Concluding these findings, this study discovered that while misconception of the SIS Coach role may seem to be the usual reason for anxiety towards coaching among most of the participants; novice teachers mainly fear of being inefficient, and veteran teachers fear that coaching will add to their workload. In sum, this study proposes that misconception of the SIS Coach role (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011; Zimmerman, 2006); the sentiment of deficiency (Feger et al., 2004; Gallucci et al., 2010; Knight, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010); and the myth that coaching is burdening (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Douglas, 2014) are some of the reasons for teachers to have dread or to be sceptical towards the coaching programme. By the end of this study, through observation, it showed that teachers who finally understood that SIS Coach was there to help expand on strategies or initiatives were those who were actively participating in the coaching nature. Those who held on to their dreads or misperceptions expressed the resistance towards coaching and were reluctant to collaborate with the SIS Coach.

**Recommendations**

These findings brought to light several significant recommendations for the stakeholders to consider the success of the teacher coaching programme. Firstly, the depiction of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the teacher coaching programme to the schools needs to be revised. Secondly, the focus of the coaching efforts needs to be widened to all schools and teachers and not only teachers in low-performing schools (Knight, 2015). It is vital to make coaching as a culture in every school so that it is not stigmatised mainly as punishment, creating brighter chances for effective partnership (Knight, 2009b).

Thirdly, the *PPD* leaders should not spread the SIS Coaches too thinly across too many schools (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). They should be given ample time to work in ongoing ways in one to three schools so that they would be able to create substantive partnership not only with the teachers and administrators but also the students (Kane & Rosenquist, 2018). Furthermore, they would also be able to frequent their visits to support effectual teacher growth. Fourthly, it is crucial for the SIS Coaches to practice the right approach and principles with the teachers. They should not tell teachers what to do, but they should also not withhold any expertise they have that might support a teacher's growth or the students' learning (Knight, 2019). This brings into light the need for CPD for SIS Coaches.

**Conclusion**

This study themed three main factors of anxiety towards coaching that were apparent in all these three districts; making teacher buy-in unattainable for the SIS Coaches if it is not addressed accordingly (Chval et al., 2010; Gibson, 2005; Saphier & West, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). These factors may slow the implementation and progress of the coaching programme. When the SIS Coaches are cognizant to the reasons from the very beginning, it benefits the long-term relationship between them. Hence, it is vital for the SIS Coaches especially, that they do not 'kick the can down the road' but work towards building a long-term relationship with the teachers right from the initial stage of their coaching work.

**Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank all those individuals and organizations who have generously shared their time, experience, and materials for the purpose of this study. Nothing would have been possible without their support and participation.

**Corresponding Author**

Zubaidah Bibi binti Mobarak Ali, Faculty of Education, National University of Malaysia  
Email: ikazubaidahali@gmail.com

**References**

- Achinstein, B., & Ogawa, R. (2006). (In) Fidelity: What the Resistance of New Teachers Reveals about Professional Principles and Prescriptive Educational Policies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(1), 30–63. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.76.1.e14543458r811864>
- Aguilar, E. (2013). *The Art of Coaching : Effective Strategies for School Transformation* (First). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Aguilar, E. (2016). *The art of coaching teams : building resilient communities that transform schools*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Atteberry, A., & Bryk, A. S. (2011). *Analysing Teacher Participation in Literacy Coaching*

- Activities. *The Elementary School Journal*, 112(2), 356–382.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/661994>
- Borman, J., & Feger, S. (2006). Instructional Coaching: Key Themes from the Literature. In *The Education Alliance Brown University*. Retrieved from [www.alliance.brown.edu](http://www.alliance.brown.edu)
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Britton, L. R., & Anderson, K. A. (2010). Peer coaching and pre-service teachers: Examining an underutilised concept. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(2), 306–314.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.03.008>
- Chval, K. B., Arbaugh, F., Lannin, J. K., Van Garderen, D., Cummings, L., Estapa, A. T., & Huey, M. E. (2010). The Transition from Experienced Teacher to Mathematics Coach: Establishing a New Identity. *The Elementary School Journal*, 111(1), 191–216.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/653475>
- Coburn, C. E., & Woulfin, S. L. (2012). Reading Coaches and the Relationship Between Policy and Practice. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(1), 5–30. <https://doi.org/10.1002/RRQ.008>
- Denton, C. A., & Hasbrouck, J. (2009). A description of instructional coaching and its relationship to consultation. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 19(2), 150–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474410802463296>
- Deussen, T., Coskie, T., Robinson, L., & Autio, E. (2007). “Coach” Can Mean Many Things: Five Categories of Literacy Coaches in Reading First. In *REL Northwest* (Vol. 5). Retrieved from [http://www.education.ucf.edu/mirc/Research/Coach Can Mean.pdf](http://www.education.ucf.edu/mirc/Research/Coach%20Can%20Mean.pdf)
- Douglas, S. (2014). *Why Teachers should not Fear the “Instructional Coach”* -. Retrieved from <https://coachcampus.com/coach-portfolios/research-papers/>
- Elish-Piper, L., & L’Allier, S. K. (2011). Examining the Relationship between Literacy Coaching and Student Reading Gains in Grades K–3. *The Elementary School Journal*, 112(1), 83–106. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/660685>
- Eow, Y. L. (2015). Appreciative Inquiry as Theory and Practices in Coaching Mathematics Teachers. *4th Regional Conference on Educational Leadership and Management (RCELAM)*, (October).
- Feger, S., Woleck, K., & Hickman, P. (2004). How to Develop a Coaching Eye. *Journal of Staff Development*, 25(2), 14–18. Retrieved from <http://www.nsd.org/news/issue>
- Gallucci, C., Van Lare, M. D., Yoon, I. H., & Boatright, B. (2010). Instructional Coaching: Building Theory About the Role and Organisational Support for Professional Learning. *American Educational Research Journal*, 47(4), 919–963.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831210371497>
- Gibson, S. A. (2005). Developing Knowledge of Coaching. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 14(2), 63–74. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ796419.pdf>
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (Vol. 1 & 2). Retrieved from <http://methods.sagepub.com/reference/sage-encyc-qualitative-research->
- Johnson, J., Leibowitz, S., & Perret, K. (2017). *The coach approach to school leadership: Leading teachers to higher levels of effectiveness*. ASCD.
- Kane, B. D., & Rosenquist, B. (2018). Making the most of instructional coaches. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(7), 21–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718767855>
- Kaur, M. (2017). To recognise, realise and differentiate the learning needs of students. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 25(2), 503–510.
- King, D., Neuman, M., Pelchat, J., Potochnik, T., Rao, S., & Thompson, J. (2009). Instructional

- Coaching: Professional Development Strategies that Improve Instruction. In *Annenberg Institute for School Reform*. Retrieved from [www.annenberginstitute.org](http://www.annenberginstitute.org)
- Knight, J. (2004). Instructional coaches make progress through partnership: Intensive support can improve teaching. *National Staff Development Council*, 25(2), 32–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004270385200031>
- Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction*. In *Corwin Press*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.my/books>
- Knight, J. (2009a). Coaching the Key to Translating Research into Practice Lies in Continuous, Job-Embedded Learning with Ongoing Support. *JSD*, 30(1), 18–20. Retrieved from <http://dist.lib.usu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/>
- Knight, J. (2009b). What Can We Do About Teacher Resistance? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(07), 508–513. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20446161>
- Knight, J. (2015). *Better conversations : coaching ourselves and each other to be more credible, caring, and connected*. Retrieved from <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/11510741>
- Knight, J. (2019). Instructional coaching for implementing visible learning: A model for translating research into practice. *Education Sciences*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9020101>
- Kohler, F. W., Crilley, K. M. C., Shearer, D. D., & Good, G. (1997). Effects of peer coaching on teacher and student outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1997.10544578>
- Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2016). The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence. In *Review of Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654318759268>
- Malaysian Ministry of Education. (2013). *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015 (Preschool to Post-Secondary Education)*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education, Malaysia.
- Malaysian Ministry of Education. (2015). *Panduan Pengurusan Program Transformasi Daerah (DTP) 2.0* (2nd ed.). Putrajaya: Bahagian Pengurusan Sekolah Harian.
- Malaysian Ministry of Education. (2017). *Panduan Pengurusan Program Transformasi Daerah (DTP) 3.0* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.moe.gov.my>
- Matsumura, L. C., Garnier, H. E., Correnti, R., Junker, B., & DiPrima Bickel, D. (2010). Investigating the Effectiveness of a Comprehensive Literacy Coaching Program in Schools with High Teacher Mobility. *The Elementary School Journal*, 111(1), 35–62. <https://doi.org/10.1086/653469>
- Matsumura, L. C., Garnier, H. E., & Resnick, L. B. (2010). Implementing Literacy Coaching. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(2), 249–272. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373710363743>
- McCann, T. M., & Johannessen, L. R. (2004). Why Do New Teachers Cry? *The Clearing House*, 77(4), 138–145. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30189884>
- Neufeld, B., & Roper, D. (2002). Off to a Good Start: Year I of Collaborative Coaching and Learning in the Effective Practice Schools. In *Education Matters*. Boston.
- Ng, K. C., Choong, L. K., Norizan, A., Lam, K. K., & Mariam, S. (2014). Tinjauan Awal Persepsi School Improvement Specialist Coach (SISC+): Perkembangan, Cabaran dan Ekspektasi. *Academia*, 1–15. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/13583759/>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 169–186. Retrieved from <http://legacy.oise.utoronto.ca/research/field-centres/ross/ctl1014/Patton1990.pdf>

- Saphier, J., & West, L. (2009). How Coaches Can Maximise Student Learning. *Phi Delta Kappan ; Bloomington*, 91(4), 46–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171009100410>.
- Siaw, H. K., Karwan, M. S., & Abdul Rashid, M. (2019). Instructional Coaching as a Tool for Professional Development : Coaches ' Roles and Considerations. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(5), 1106–1132. Retrieved from <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol24/iss5/13>.
- Syahiran, A. M., Radzuwan, A. R., Kamariah, Y., & Safawati Basirah, Z. (2016). Exploring the School Improvement Specialist Coaches' Experience in Coaching English Language Teachers. *Arab World English Journal*, 7(3), 271–285.
- Tschannen-Moran, B., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2010). *Evocative Coaching : Transforming Schools One Conversation at a Time*. Retrieved from <https://www.wiley.com/>
- Tschannen-Moran, B., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2011). The Coach and the Evaluator. *Educational Leadership*, 69(2), 10–16.
- Tung, R., Ouimette, M., & Feldman, J. (2004). The Challenge of Coaching: Providing Cohesion among Multiple Reform Agendas. *Center for Collaborative Education*.
- Zimmerman, J. (2006). Why Some Teachers Resist Change and What Principals Can Do About It. *NASSP Bulletin*, 90(3), 238–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636506291521>