

Partnership Principles in a Teacher Coaching Programme (Partnership Principles di dalam Program Bimbingan Guru)

ZUBAIDAH BIBI MOBARAK ALI, HAMIDAH YAMAT*, WAHIZA WAHI

ABSTRACT

Research provides strong support for the promise of teacher coaching programme in redesigning teachers' instructional practices that enhance students' learning. Informed by Knight's (2007) partnership coaching principles, this paper reports on a study on teacher coaching programme in Malaysia, particularly involving teacher coaches, known as School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+). This case study disclosed the partnership principles applied by an SISC+ with three of her coached English Language (EL) teachers and how these principles were being exercised in a suburban school, and how the principles achieved collaborative teacher-SISC+ alliance. Data were drawn from observations and interviews conducted with the SISC+ and the coached teachers. The data were analysed thematically. Findings revealed that the SISC+ effectively utilised the principles, and by doing so, she was able to collaborate with the teachers and support their learning. The findings implicate that these principles must be learnt and understood by all the SISC+ as basic of coaching in obtaining teacher acceptance, build teacher-SISC+ collaborative relationships and support required changes in teachers' instructional practices and that will bring about astounding students' outcome.

Key Words: teacher coaching programme; teacher coaching; School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+); Partnership Principles; Educational Management; teacher professionalism

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan dapat meningkatkan pengetahuan tentang program bimbingan guru yang disasarkan untuk menambahbaik amalan pengajaran guru yang dapat memberi impak positif kepada pembelajaran murid. Berdasarkan prinsip bimbingan perkongsian (Knight 2007), artikel ini melaporkan dapatan kajian mengenai program bimbingan guru di Malaysia yang melibatkan pembimbing guru yang dikenali sebagai School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+). Kajian kes ini menunjukkan bagaimana prinsip perkongsian ini digunakan dan diterapkan dalam amalan bimbingan oleh seorang SISC+ dengan tiga orang guru Bahasa Inggeris (EL) bimbingan di sebuah sekolah luar bandar, dan bagaimana prinsip tersebut mencapai pakatan guru-SISC+ secara kolaboratif. Data diambil dari pemerhatian dan temu bual yang dilakukan ke atas SISC+ dan guru yang dibimbing. Data dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa SISC+ telah menggunakan prinsip perkongsian tersebut dengan berkesan dan dengan melaluinya, dia dapat berkolaboratif dengan para guru dan menyokong proses pembelajaran mereka. Dapatan ini mengimplikasikan bahawa prinsip-prinsip ini mesti dipelajari dan difahami oleh semua SISC+ sebagai asas bimbingan dalam memupuk penerimaan guru, membina hubungan kerjasama guru-SISC+ dan menyokong perubahan yang diperlukan dalam amalan pengajaran guru dan yang akan membawa hasil yang mengagumkan dalam kalangan pelajar.

Kata Kunci: program bimbingan guru; bimbingan guru; School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+); Partnership Principles; Pengurusan Pendidikan; profesionalisme guru

INTRODUCTION

Teacher coaching has turned out to be a favourable structure of teachers' professional advancement across many countries' education spectrum. It is indeed a promising approach that is capable of increasing teacher capacity, albeit it requires time, a supportive learning environment and teacher acceptance for

sustained improvement of practices in the classroom, within a school, across schools and even an entire district (Saphier & West 2009). Knight (2009a) states three models of teacher coaching that were mostly used in educational settings - literacy coaching (Toll 2009), cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston 1994) and instructional coaching (Knight 2007). Each coaching model has its very own specific methodology and

strategy, yet the underlying philosophy of giving high-quality, in-situ, individualised, and sustained professional development stays consistent.

This paper reports on a study on a teacher coaching programme in Malaysia, which specifically accentuates on the School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+). These SISC+ are full-time coaches responsible for providing school-based on-site coaching to teachers along the three interlinked dimensions of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (Ministry of Education 2013). These SISC+ are employed and placed in all District Education offices so that they can spend 60% of their time on teacher coaching activities. They are required to give teachers more prominent, more straightforward in-situ ongoing help to raise the level of teachers' professionalism that would affect the learners' accomplishments. The focal point of these coaching sessions is on the mastery of instructional practices that incorporates pedagogical skills, for example, creating higher-order thinking ability among learners, educating learners of various capacity levels and administrating successful assessment. The SISC+ are supposed to direct regular monitoring schedules to boost supportive network for teachers to improve their delivery of the educational plan in a way that underlines abilities and skills critical for the 21st century (Ministry of Education 2013).

Knight (2007) advocated partnership learning as a framework for teacher coaching as professional growth. It is grounded in the notion that people learn best when they collaborate as partners through many interactions, shared expertise and experience. The partnership is often teacher-driven but facilitated by a coach. The Partnership framework, which guides productive coaching practice, incorporates seven principles - Equality, Choice, Voice, Dialogue, Reflection, Praxis and Reciprocity (Knight 2007:37). This framework suggests that coaches should infuse professional conversations with respect; only then will they be able to work as equal partners with the collaborating teachers in the process of learning. Furthermore, the interactive social partnership between the coach and teacher can elicit teacher change and retention of newly learned teaching strategies.

It is important to note that up to this point, there has been little research done on the coaching model using Knight's theoretical construct of partnership coaching (Knight 2007; Knight & Cornett 2009). Since human actions are based on a theory or principles, there is a need for studies of implementation and teacher attitudes towards coaching. Thus, the study reported in this paper sought to uncover the Partnership Principles embraced by the SISC+ and how these principles were being exercised in their workplaces. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What principles are the SISC+ and coached English Language (EL) teachers embracing in their workplaces, how they practice the principles in their coaching nature? and
2. How the principles achieved collaborative teacher-SISC+ alliance.

To explicate the above matter, this paper begins by describing the concepts that frame this study, which is the Partnership Principles. This is followed by explaining the methodology deployed by the present study. Next, the findings describe a case of the Partnership Principles as experienced and exercised by an SISC+ and three teachers in their workplaces and the discussions that follow highlight the application of the key Partnership Principles. Finally, the paper ends with a brief consideration of the implications of the findings of the study.

THE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

The Partnership Principles provide the coaches with a foundation to work from when they collaborate with teachers and a conceptual language for them to elaborate on how they collaborated with teachers. The seven Partnership Principles are a philosophical framework that is recommended and considered best practice for coaches who want to develop highly effective working relationships with the collaborating teachers (Knight 2007). According to Anderson and colleagues (2014), teachers have more trust in coaches who intentionally practice partnership strategies in their coaching. The logic follows that the teachers who trust the coaches will willingly seek advice and assistance. Thus, to successfully position themselves as both – a trusted peer and a resource for instructional improvement, the SISC+, should utilise the Partnership Principles. The seven principles that guide the partnership between collaborating teachers and coaches are summarised and synthesised as follows (Knight 2007; 2009a):

EQUALITY

Equality is the value that coaches can acknowledge collaborating teachers as equal partners and work together as partners, reflecting and co-creating collaboratively to provide the best teaching and learning environment for students. Coaches should listen to teachers to learn from each other, to comprehend and then give feedback. To provide equal value to the coaching process, they should not just tell the teacher what to do, but both partners share ideas and make decisions together as equals. Equality establishes a partnership in learning and provides foundational support for a coaching relationship.

CHOICE

Choice is the principle that indicates how much and to what extent teachers have options in their work with the coaches. In a partnership, decisions are made collaboratively and concerning choices are made individually (Block 2013; Knight 2007). For coaches, this means that teacher choice is to be valued in every coaching professional dialogue and session. Coaches do not envision making teachers ‘think like them’ as the purpose of their job, but rather a coach’s goal is to meet teachers where they currently are in their practice and offer choices for learning. Teachers have the choice to decide what they want to learn and how they plan to learn it. Devine and colleagues (2013:1127) state by doing this, “it ensures that the coaching is tailor-made for the individual needs of the teacher and the teacher remains in the driving seat of his/her own development.” This principle of choice establishes teacher acceptance and motivation to engage in the teacher coaching programme.

VOICE

“Professional learning should empower and respect the voices of teachers” (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2013:3). Voice is the idea that teachers are not merely receivers of advice or ideas from coaches, but that their thoughts, ideas and experiences have merit. The coach and teacher in a partnership are to be given the opportunities to voice, to convey their perspective, opinion or point of view. Both must view the teacher coaching programme as a tool that supports teachers to voice their ideas and opinions and not a tool that determines teachers’ thinking. When voice is encouraged, and contributions are valued, learning happens because knowledge is shared collectively (Barkley & Bianco 2010). Just like the principle of choice, voice too establishes teacher acceptance and motivation to engage in the teacher coaching programme. These two principles, choice and voice, complement each other in most situations.

DIALOGUE

“Professional learning should enable authentic dialogue” (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2013:3). Dialogue is a tool used within the coaching process to stimulate teacher learning and change. It naturally follows in a productive teacher-coach relationship as it involves both parties engaging in conversations at multiple activities around topics of instructional improvement and student learning. Partners should mutually agree upon taken decisions by engaging in a two-way conversation. Ideas should roll back and forth to ensure no one dominates the talk and impose their ideas on the

other; instead, they learn together as they explore those ideas (Rigeluth, Beatty, & Myers 2017). For coaches, this means that they need to listen more than they talk. Coaches should not dominate the conversation, but instead, they are to drive the teachers into content-focused conversations. They should have the goal of collaboratively thinking and learning with the teachers. Both parties engage in reflection about the material to be learned and applied. Costa and Garmston (2002) asserted that in the context of coaching relationships, dialogue, and reflection are the mediating factors that transform teachers’ practices.

REFLECTION

“Reflection is an integral part of professional learning” (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2013:3). As the principle of dialogue, reflection is a tool used within the coaching process to stimulate teacher learning and change. It is a notion that both the teacher and the coach put themselves in thinking about how the instructional practices and proposed techniques have or are probably going to affect students’ learning. In creating a learning partnership, partners are equal, free to speak their minds and free to make real, meaningful choices. One of the most critical choices that collaborating teachers will make is how to make sense and learn whatever a coach is proposing. Partners do not dictate to each other what to believe, but they respect their partners’ professionalism and guide them to reflect on how they see their instructions and students before making their own decisions. Thus, coaches encourage collaborating teachers to consider ideas before adopting them. Indeed, coaches must comprehend that everyone is a reflective thinker where he/she is free to adopt or reject ideas unless the coaches are not thinkers themselves. This principle encourages teachers to become reflective practitioners and make choices about their teaching practices (Devine et al. 2013).

PRAXIS

“Teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practise as they are learning” (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2013:3). Praxis comes after the reflection and planning process. Praxis is the classroom-based outcome of the teacher coaching programme, which incorporates reflection, change in practice and the continuous cycle of the coaching processes to sustain changes in instructional practices. Individuals’ experiences become more meaningful when they are in a partnership. When teachers reflect on the suggested ideas and practices them in the class, it makes the partnership relationship worthwhile. This Partnership Principle gives the teachers the freedom to adapt and adopt the new learning to suit theirs and their students’

needs. Coaches are to support the teachers by focusing on how the teachers can best learn the ideas and how they should apply the ideas in their classroom. The core of it is on putting learning in everyday working life (Devine et al. 2013).

RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is the belief that coaching is a win-win learning situation for both - the teacher and coach. In partnership, all partners gain from the achievement, knowledge, or experience of others where everyone is rewarded by what each individual contributes. For that reason, the coach should aim to learn alongside the collaborating teachers. When a coach learns about each teacher's strengths and weaknesses, especially when the teacher is executing the new learning in the classroom, the coach enhances his/her ability to collaborate with other teachers as well as the skill of supporting and applying the new teaching method.

In teacher coaching, the SISC+ are learning as much about students and classroom instructions as the teachers with whom they collaborate. An environment for reciprocity is created by the interconnectedness of the other six partnership principles (Knight 2007 2018). When the SISC+ treat the coached teachers with equality, they acknowledge that the teachers have as much to contribute as they do. Knight (2018) emphasised that we learn more when we value each other. When the SISC+ give the coached teachers choice instead of mandates, they establish the teachers as

intelligent adults who can make essential decisions. When the SISC+ give coached teachers voice, they show a willingness to listen to their challenges. When the SISC+ engage teachers in dialogue, they acknowledge that they cannot understand an issue fully on their own. When the SISC+ engage coached teachers in reflection, they value the thinking processes that have led to current practice. When SISC+ value praxis in making change, they acknowledge that one size does not fit all and that teachers need to be engaged in inquiry and experimentation in making change.

Powerful partnership coaching is a valuable professional development strategy used for increasing skill transfer. The interactive, social partnership between the coach and teacher can elicit teacher change and retention of newly learned teaching strategies. However, acting on the partnership principles does not seem easy for the SISC+ as there is so much for them to do to succeed in the teacher coaching programme. To little research has been done on any coaching model using Knight's (2007) theoretical construct of partnership coaching (Knight 2007; Knight & Cornett 2009), and the scholar himself has called for studies of the implementation of the principles. Since humans' actions rely on theories or principles, there is a need for studies of implementation and teacher attitudes towards coaching. Thus, it is vital to discover what principles are the SISC+ and coached English Language (EL) teachers embracing in their workplaces, how they practice the principles in their coaching nature and how the principles achieved collaborative teacher-SISC+ alliance?

TABLE 1. Partnership Principles and Purpose

Partnership Principles	Purpose
Equality	Establishes a partnership in learning and provides foundational support for the coaching relationship.
Choice and Voice	Establishes teacher acceptance and motivation to engage in the teacher coaching program.
Dialogue and Reflection	The tool used in the coaching process to stimulate teacher learning and change.
Praxis	The classroom-based outcome of the teacher coaching program which incorporates reflection, changes in practice and the continuous cycle of the coaching processes to sustain changes in instructional practices.
Reciprocity	The belief that coaching is a win-win learning situation for both coaches.

TABLE 2. Demographic Information

SIS Coach	Teacher Pseudonym	Age	Years of teaching experience
S	T1	47	23
	T2	46	16
	T3	34	9

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This paper is part of a larger multiple case study which investigated three cases of an SISC+ and three coached EL teachers in each. It explored the three SISC+ and nine coached EL teachers' experiences of the Coaching Programme. This study adopted the qualitative data collection method of interviews and observations to gain insights into the partnership principles that are embraced by the SISC+ and coached EL teachers in their coaching sessions in one of the cases. Given the evidence that partnership principles are the best practice for coaches, it is important to further comprehend how these principles can enhance highly working relationship between the SISC+ and the coached EL teachers. This study has obtained ethical approval from the educational Planning and Research Division, EPRD, Ministry of Education. Participants have given their consents to participate in this study.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

In determining the participants and parallel to the nature of the qualitative paradigm, the sampling procedure that was used in this case study was purposeful sampling. The following criteria were set to recruit the SISC+ participant: i) willing to participate in the study to ensure the SISC+ participants are inclined to really open up about their experiences; ii) recruited since the inception of the coaching programme throughout the country, that is in 2014, to ensure they are really experienced with the coaching programme and rich with information; iii) serving in the same District Education Office (DEO) since recruited to ensure each participant had well understood the teachers' working culture in their respective district; iv) TESL trained to delaminate responses that are not relevant to the issue of EL teaching and learning; and v) assigned as secondary EL SISC+ during the inception in 2014 and before the change of role in 2017 to enable the in-depth description of the group.

The selection of the coached EL teachers was also made using the purposeful sampling technique. The purposively identified SISC+ was requested to identify three volunteers from the secondary schools she visited. The SISC+ was, therefore briefed on the criteria set for the teacher participant selection. The coached EL teachers were chosen based on the criteria that reflect the concepts explored in this study (Creswell 2014a). The criteria set in a selection of the coached EL teachers; that they were: i) willing to participate in the study to ensure the teachers are inclined to really open up about their experiences; ii) TESL trained to delaminate responses that are not relevant to the issue of EL teaching and learning; iii) experienced in teaching EL: veteran - above 20 years 11 to 20 years, and novice

- 10 years and below, so that there are multiple perspectives of the participants; and iv) collaborating with the SISC+ in the coaching programme for at least a year to ensure that they are productive informants.

This article focuses on one of the cases where the SISC+ had chosen three of her EL teacher participants from one same suburban school. The school has more than 1500 students enrolled in lower and upper secondary classes. The three teachers have all been coached by only this SISC+ for the past four years. Table 2 condenses the participants.

INSTRUMENTS

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 more extensive study, and not all of the information collected is reported in the findings section. All the participants went through two individual interview protocols – one unstructured interview and one semi-structured interview, which was conducted at two different phases of the data collection. The unstructured interview protocol that was adopted at the early phase of the data collection was meant to create a space within which the participant would feel free to tell his/her story (Olsen 2016). The participant thus had considerable control over the interview process (Corbin & Morse 2003). There were no 'questions' that were 'asked' per se, but the information was sought by introducing some broad topics for discussion within the context of a general conversation (Corbin & Morse 2003). In this study, during the interview, the researcher collected the participants' demographic information (refer to *Appendix A*), and asked questions like, "*Based on your experience of the coaching programme, please tell me something about the coaching programme that would help me understand what is it all about?*", to stimulate the participants to tell their story as they see it, feel it and experience it (Corbin & Morse 2003). When the participants were found to be generous and comfortable with their stories, more questions were asked within the context of the question above. It gave the study data of the participants' initial perceptions of the coaching that they experienced. Separate semi-structured interview protocols were developed for the SISC+ and coached teachers. The logic in the choice of using the individual semi-structured interview protocol was to allow the researcher seek further clarification about some areas that were discussed in the unstructured interview carried out at the initial phase of the study (Olsen 2016). The questions for the interviews were carefully crafted by the researcher using the interview questions matrix. This is to elicit responses that would address the research questions and to avoid straying from the intended study. Since the literature on the research

method of interviewing has revealed the importance of pre-testing the research instrument, hence, before starting the investigation, the researcher field-tried the semi-structured interview protocol (Burke & Miller 2001; Creswell 2014c). All the interviews were conducted face-to-face and audiotaped.

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-SISC+ dyads (D). For the purpose of this study, the post-conference session is defined as a one-on-one professional dialogue between the SISC+ and the coached EL teacher, which takes place after the lesson observation. All the post-conference coaching sessions between the SISC+ and the teachers were held immediately after the observed lessons. These post-conference coaching data provided valuable

information on how the SISC+ shared information, provided further analysis of what conditions facilitated successful SISC+ and coached teacher coaching sessions based on the seven principles of the Partnership Approach, suggested by Knight (2004 2007). All the interviews (Int.) and exchanges during the post-conference coaching sessions (PC) that were audio-recorded were then transcribed.

DATA ANALYSIS

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 strictly referred to, as the thematic analysis is flexible and it allows for a rich, detailed and elaborate description of the data, and the software ATLAS.ti version 8 was used to manage the enormous amount of data. Figure 1 summarises the steps taken for data analysis.

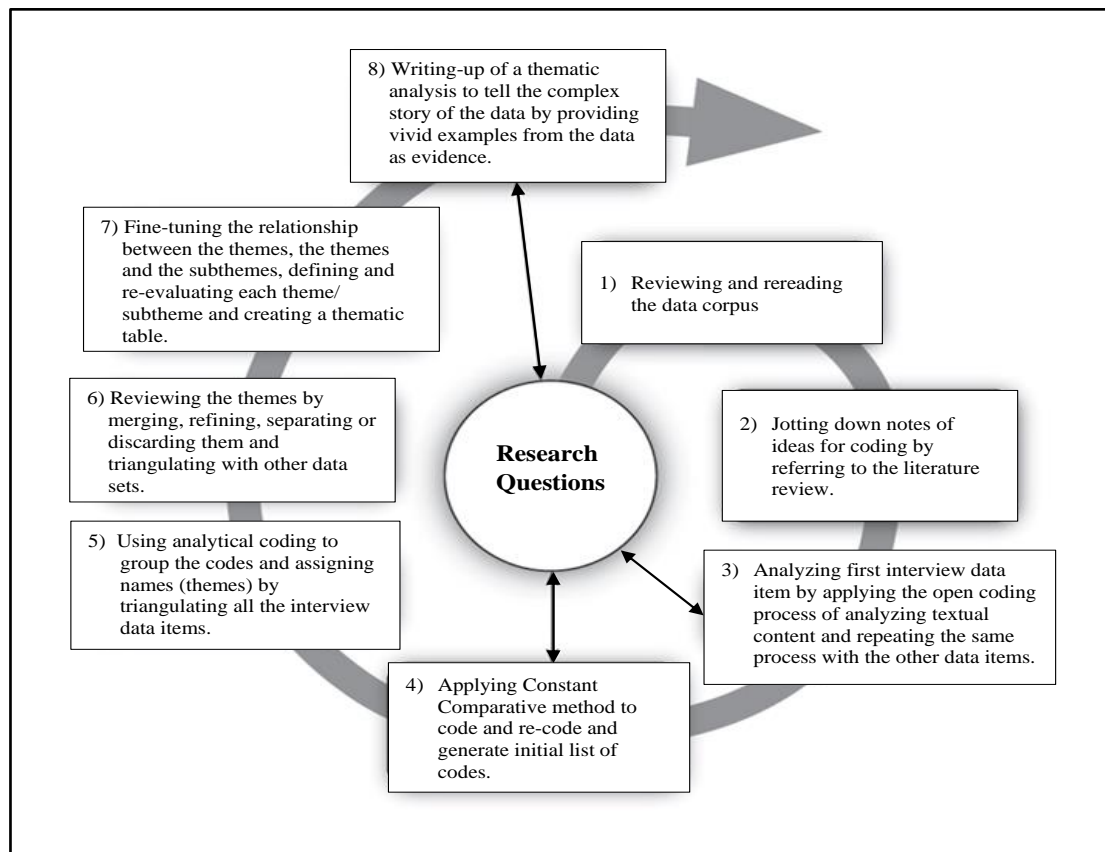


FIGURE 1. Phases of Data Analysis [adapted from (Kuckartz 2014)]

FINDINGS

The findings and discussions are explained by answering the research questions of the study: What principles are the SISC+ and coached EL teachers embracing in their workplaces, how they practice the principles in their coaching nature and how the principles achieved collaborative teacher-SISC+ alliance? Generally, the findings reveal that the SISC+ effectively utilised all the seven principles during her coaching sessions, and she was able to employ her knowledge into speech, language and communication to support her teachers. The use of partnership principles throughout her coaching conversations with the teachers impacted teacher acceptance, teacher-SISC+ relationship and learning.

These statements found in this section are derived from the responses in the participants' interviews (Int.) and the post-conference coaching sessions (PC). It should be emphasised that these codes are utilised to describe the participants: S – SISC+, T1, T2 & T3 – Teachers, D1, D2, D3 – Dyads. This section presents the principles that were evident in the coaching practices of an SISC+ and three teachers at a suburban school. Examining and understanding the participants' stories and practices, as well as carefully observing them in action were the crucial steps taken in constructing the finding.

EQUALITY

Partnership involves relationships between equal professional peers (Knight 2007). Therefore, it is significant that the SISC+ create an environment that opens up the collegial, professional relationship with the collaborating teachers. As such, findings showed that the SISC+ was sensitive about how she used language to communicate respect for the teachers with whom she intends to collaborate. This frequent use of the word 'we' in the SISC+'s voice during the coaching sessions signifies how she acknowledges collaborating teachers as equal partners: *"Then, we will sit together.... We become as friends rather than an officer.... we are teachers just like them.... you are not alone, we are together"* (S_Int.).

A small action like this seems to have an impact on the teachers as they too were captured using the word 'we' in their interviews to refer to themselves and the SISC+. For example:

"Then, we would discuss regarding specific things like partners." (T1_Int.); and *"We had a peer sharing session."* (T2_Int.).

One of the teachers said, "the word 'we' comforts [her] and gives her the trust to react naturally and do what [she] enjoys the most in [her] teaching" (T3_Int.). It made the teachers feel that the SISC+ was one of them: *"She understands the teachers' plight, the teachers'*

issues. She understands that all the students are like that." (T1_Int.); and *"We can talk to the SISC+ about teaching and learning in a way that we could never talk to a superior, and she will listen to us."* (T2_Int.).

This principle situates the teachers and SISC+ to be equal partners, just like how the teachers perceived their SISC+, *"[she] is more like a comfortable partner.... she is a very good companion, as a partner, you are not alone, we are together"* (T1_Int.) (T2_Int.). This preaches that the teachers valued the SISC+ as a friend, giving *"mutual respect"* of *"talking on the adult terms and it is professional"* (T2_Int.). In concurrence to this, the SISC+ communicated, *"we are teachers just like them....I have been through it myself....and I know the burden and the situation"* (S_Int.). In addition, the teachers also valued their SISC+ as a friend as well as a professional: *"....it is sort of an academician talking to another academician, a professional talking to another professional in the same line....we discuss on specific things like partners."* (T1_Int.); *"....she is like a friend with certain power in her, certain professional level...she acted like a peer to me, helping me...."* (T2_Int.); and *"....she is more like a comfortable partner.... a very good companion, as a partner.... we are together"* (T3_Int.).

The SISC+ was also witnessed, always infusing her post-conference conversations with much respect and not violating any of the teachers' opinions. The teachers, on the other hand, related to the SISC+ as a professional equal, which further enhanced their relationships' quality and efficiency. The evolution of this trust and respect created equality both in learning and in decision-making between the teachers and their SISC+.

CHOICE AND VOICE

A well designed, effective professional learning not only empowers but also respects teachers' voices (Short & Rinehart 1992; Thomas & Velthouse 1990). Choice and Voice were two other most essential principles for establishing a coaching foundation within these participants' experiences and practices.

The SISC+ stated that she usually *"deals with [the teachers] on how they want to be guided.... what they want to improve on."* (S_Int.); and never forced the teachers *"to accept her ideas or suggestions"* instead, she allows the teachers to make their own decisions (S_Int.). She elaborated: *"I normally ask them, for today, how many parts that you want to improve, so I will help you in that sense. Do you want to improve on the questioning technique skills or what, then we will work on that part only? I give 100% say to the teachers, they decide which part they want to change."* (S_Int.).

Recapitulating this declaration, the teachers said, *"The SISC+ gave me choices to improve my teaching"*

(T3_Int.); *"The SISC+ gives a choice for me to decide whether I want to take or follow the suggestions....The SISC+ will say, "This is a suggestion, this is my way, this is your way, so, compare and take which is the best one, it is up to you."* (T2_Int.); and *"She suggested to say that this is what she thinks I can do at this stage, but the decision is mine. So, concerning the planning and the choice of activities or the sequence of the activities about the lesson, it is still up to me, how I am comfortable to do it."* (T3_Int.)

These remarks suggest that the SISC+ recognises that teachers need to adapt the ideas for their individual classrooms and that they should not be forced to implement something. In the post-conference conversations, the SISC+ was also witnessed offering the teachers choices and getting them to adapt the ideas based on their and their students' needs: *"Just my suggestion, but you decide which part you think your students need to focus on more. What you want them to do?"* (D1_PC); *"So, which one do you think you would like to improve on for the next lesson?"* (D1_PC); *"Do you think this can be done with your students?"* (D2_PC) (D3_PC); and *".... if you feel that is possible? I won't enforce it."* (D3_PC). She also encouraged the teachers to express their opinion about the methods she introduced, giving them the choice and voice: *".... what do you think of the ideas?"* (D1_PC); *"What do you think?"* (D2_PC); and *"What do you think, will that be possible?"* (D3_PC).

It suggests that the SISC+ recognises that in partnership learning, she needs to respect teachers' ability to select strategies based on their students' needs and act more like a facilitator of their learning rather than a dictator. By doing so, the teachers felt *"comfortable"* to collaborate with her (S_Int.). One of the teachers, supportively said, *"I feel safe and comfortable with her.... she does not stress us"* (T3_Int.). According to the SISC+, she even gives the teachers choice on when, how, and what they want to learn: *"Even the classes, I don't choose the class, I will call tell them and ask I am scheduled to go to your school next week, give me the date, the time, the class. You choose which class do you need my help and for what reason."* (S_Int.); and *".... the teachers might say I don't need the pre-session, but sometimes the teacher might want post- only. It depends on the teachers."* (S_Int.). Likewise, the teachers revealed that they were even given a say for their learning: *"....it is up to what I need in the first place"* (T1_Int.); and *"....she will ask me to suggest for a class also"* (T2_Int.).

The SISC+ believed that by giving the teachers choice on how and what they want to learn, *"they [the teachers] just like become more confident"* (S_Int.). On the other hand, the teachers felt that the SISC+ opened the door to healthy communication with them where they felt *"free"* to *"discuss"* or *"talk"* to her (T2_Int.)

(T3_Int.): *"I feel free to share whatever that I would like to share with them"* (T1_Int.); *"[We] share our problems with students' achievements" and issues "on how to help [them]"* (T2_Int.); and *"I believe the SISC+ is a good listener"* (T3_Int.). As a result, the teachers had the opportunity to voice, express their point of view without fear of being judged: *"I must also indirectly tell you that CEFR is causing a very big confusion among the teachers."* (D1_PC); and *"Each class has its own strengths and weaknesses. So, to apply this to another class, I have to change a lot."* (D3_PC).

This indicates that the session offered the teachers true choices and viewed coaching as a cosy experience for them. When the teachers are given choice and voice in their professional learning, they are more likely to perceive coaching to be beneficial and welcome it open-heartedly: *"I basically agree for her to come to my classes and discuss them with me"* (T1_Int.); *"I still have the choice to decide what will be the best for my students."* (T2_Int.); and *"I like about this coaching because there is a two-way communication. What I mean is, there is always discussion, and it is never one way; you ask the question I must answer you, but there is a discussion between us where my opinion is being heard."* (T3_Int.).

All these posits that the SISC+ had put in much effort to apply the principles of Choice and Voice while collaborating with the teachers and these principles impacted the teachers' acceptance towards the SISC+ and the coaching, which eventually made new learning possible.

DIALOGUE AND REFLECTION

In partnership coaching, both - the coaches and teachers should collaborate in authentic dialogues fostering reflective practice where teachers experiment with their new learnings in their classroom, and then they get together with the coach to discuss the results (Knight 2007). In this study, Dialogue and Reflection were the tools utilised to help these teachers see through the windows and discover ways in which to improve practice for their students' benefit.

This excerpt shows how both the SISC+ and the teachers, co-created the coaching focus or goal: *"So, those are the things that we need to improve on because we identified some students are good, and some are not that good. That is why I want us to look and try to apply this strategy. Since we have one objective, how to help them achieve that objective? So, maybe we can try this strategy."* (D2_PC). After the goal was set, both teacher and SISC+ investigated it comprehensively and thoroughly in which the teachers end up learning something new from the SISC+. Using the Dialogue and Reflection tools, as suggested by Knight (2007), SISC+ pushed the teachers: *"to reflect on their teaching and*

learning” (S_ Int.); “to put [their] thinking cap on” (T1_ Int.); “to reflect on [their] lessons” (T2_ Int.); and “provoke them to elaborate” (T1_ Int.) on the effectiveness of “the activities or methods that [they] used.” (T2_ Int.).

The teachers shared how SISC+ led an authentic discussion on their practices which stimulated their learning:

“We will talk about the methods I want to use, and she would suggest or give ideas here and there.” (T3_ Int.); “She will assist us in finding out the how and why first and then we talked about it” (T3_ Int.); and “I will tell her. I tried this in the other lesson, but it did not work. She will first say like Good, Good Job you tried or even thank me for trying and then she will ask, Which class? Moderate or weak students? She will ask me a lot of questions that will lead me to think and talk on how I did it and why I felt it did not work. She makes me become more reflective on what and how I did it, but she tries to analyse the students first before judging on others. “Let me see, maybe, maybe the students, maybe lesson, reduce this, you should, why not?” Then, she gives the suggestions, and it helps me a lot.” (T3_ Int.).

Then, the SISC+ uses inquiry to promote the teachers reflective thinking: “What should we do as a teacher to motivate them to speak on their own. Because I realise when you have too lengthy wordings on the board, they tend to read it instead of speaking because supposedly it was supposed to be a speaking practice correct? So, what do you think? What are the modifications that we can do as a teacher?” (D2_ PC). The teachers felt that the questions were “great” (T2_ Int.); “just amazing, not telling [them] but letting [them] come to the answer.” (T1_ Int.); and a “helpful” (T3_ Int.) strategy because: “.... [they] knew the answer that she wanted [them] to come were the ones she wanted [them] to reach on [their] own and she [was] just helping [them] to be more reflective and understand the things better” (T1_ Int.).

The SISC+ stimulated teachers’ passion for learning and change by “[helping] the teachers reflect on their own practices” (S1_ Int.), and then talking on practices that they implemented in the classroom: “Do you think we had ample questions that really triggered the kids to do the critical thinking?” (D2_ PC). The SISC+ was also witnessed engaging the teachers in respectful and empowering conversations, as asserted by one of the teachers: “She will not say, “you cannot do this actually”, she won’t say that. She never condemns. Whatever suggestions given is also further discussed with us.” (T2_ Int.)

S1: *Actually, they give the comfort of them speaking to you, the confidence, right? Have you ever thought about it in this manner?*

T1 : *Exactly, otherwise, you won’t get any from them. They will like panic. So, when you make*

a classroom like this, everybody is free to talk and share. And everybody gets to hear other people’s opinion.

S1: *.... you are creating the environment where they can talk to you, and they ask. And I like that part. That is what 21st century learning is all about....*

T1: *Thank you very much for guiding me....*

S1: *Are there things that you can carry over from this lesson with this class today and apply it to other lessons, with a different class, maybe?*

T1: *Yes, I will try the same technique with my other classes. I will try with the Form 4 students too. And maybe I will give them different tasks according to their level of ability and see how it works.*

By providing teachers with opportunities to be reflective using dialogue, it impacted the teachers’ future actions in progressing their students’ learning. Both Dialogue and Reflection were principles evident in all the conversation sessions between the dyads. The SISC+ and her teachers were the ones who were always witnessed maintaining eye contact, laughing and enjoying their stress-free post-conference sessions. The sessions that were never dominated by the SISC+ gave her teachers ample opportunity to use language to think through an idea for consideration. Using critical reflection and collaborative dialogue, the SISC+ and her teachers were thinking partners with back-and-forth exchanges of thinking, as shown in their post-conference sessions.

PRAXIS

“Teachers should apply their learning to their real-life practise as they are learning” (New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2013:3). In such, they achieve the principle of praxis. In this study, these participants were also evidently achieving Praxis in their coaching experiences. The teachers were witnessed applying new knowledge and skills in their observed lessons. In the second round of classroom observations, all three teachers applied a flipped classroom strategy, which was something new that they learnt. They reported that they normally try to implement or carry out all the ideas shared by the SISC+ after weighing it and making it feasible with their students’ proficiency level and ability.

One of the teachers explained, “not that what she shared is wrong or what I am doing is wrong, but it has made me reflect on my students and take effective decisions.” (T1_ Int.). She even recapitulated her learning when she detailed how she reviewed the key points of the lesson for the students and told them what

they learned for the day by referring to the learning objectives (D3_PC). The SISC+ shared further on how the teachers applied what they learnt, *"The teachers not only tried whatever discussed but they put in extra effort to improve their own competency level and was willing to be self-reflective and find something they want to do in the classroom that can lead to change in the teaching and learning practices."* (S_Int.).

Besides putting in an application, the teachers also abided to the principle of praxis when they talked on how they plan to recreate the learning in future: *"I think maybe they can come out with some posters and maybe an exhibition where each group can present and maybe I will get my other class students to come and share."* (D2_PC); and *"I will try the same technique with my other classes. I will try with the Form 4 students too. And maybe I will give them different tasks according to their level of ability and see how it works."* (D1_PC).

Being an experienced teacher, very smartly, one of the teachers explained how she went about exploring, nudging and stretching the ideas shared by SISC+: *"My friend and I sat and discussed if this kind of methodology or technique is feasible and then maybe we can fine-tune it something like that, and we can have it at our level.... Both of us reflected on it and agreed to try it on the non-exam classes and see the results."* (T1_Int.).

It is hence proven that the teachers not only applied their learning to real-life practice but also evaluated, reflected and acted upon it thoughtfully. These findings, therefore, support Knight's claim of achieving Praxis through partnership, and provide evidence that when teachers get engaged in coaching, it transforms their beliefs and practice, just like what this teacher stated: *"So, now, when I feel that my students are slowly dosing, then, switch on to that method that the SISC+ recommended to me."* (T1_Int.).

RECIPROCITY

In practising the principle of Reciprocity, coaches should expect to get as much as they give to the teachers, and as they are also learning together with the teachers. The partnership principle of Reciprocity was also present in each phase of the coaching experiences and practices, creating a mutual learning partnership between the SISC+ and teachers. The SISC+ reported that participating in the coaching programme developed her own professional skill: *"As I observe or as I enter the classroom, I learn other skills, I learn something new which I never used throughout my 12 years of teaching."* (S_Int.).

She reported that even *"when [she] joins panel meetings or any of the PLC sessions, [she] gains and learns a lot from them"* (S_Int.). Elaborating on her belief that each learning interaction is an opportunity for everyone to learn, she stated, *"So, as much as I*

share with them, they too share with me." (S_Int.). In the post-conference conversation, she was witnessed saying this to one of the teachers *"Maybe one day I will learn from you on using the technology and so on... I think one day I will come and ask for help from you."* (D3_PC). This confirms that she puts her words in action. She preaches by example, that teacher coaching is not only an equal give-and-take process but also a win-win experience for herself and her teachers.

The veteran teacher, too, admitted that *"although being an experienced teacher, [she was] still learning lots of new things from the SISC+"* (T1_Int.). Indeed, all the three teachers reported learning a lot while collaborating with the SISC+. In the post-conference session, one of the teachers even said to the SISC+: *"I learnt a lot. From no objectives to writing good objectives. From no focus to more focus. A lot. A lot. It feels great. I love learning these things. You know you are a very good SISC+."* (D3_PC)

Articulating their satisfaction with the learning process, the teachers even complimented the SISC+ during their conversation, *"...thanks to you for working me through this idea. I feel inspired."* (D2_PC); and *"Thank you very much for guiding me."* (D1_PC).

This suggests teachers valued the learning and felt worthwhile while receiving affirmation of their practices and challenges for future growth: *"I know that it is for my own good....I love to know my own strengths and learn more."* (D3_PC).

There is definitely a shared learning or shared power between the SISC+ and the teachers.

DISCUSSION

From the findings, it can be said that the SISC+ effectively made use of all the partnership principles. As an SISC+, she was able to employ her knowledge into speech, language and communication to support her teachers in sharpening their instructional practices that benefit their learners. She was also able to strengthen her relationship with the teachers by practising partnership principles in her coaching. She valued her teachers' voices and viewed herself as an equal partner in the coaching conversations.

She was evidenced to have created a very safe, comfortable, relaxing coaching conversations with her teachers where she has strived to balance the SISC+-to-teacher talk. The SISC+ and her teachers were evidenced by having eye contact with each other, nodding their heads and having friendly laughter, as well as in sitting close proximity with one another, as though it was a conversation between two friends. Furthermore, by strategizing her conversations to be more reflective, she enabled each of their teachers to fully engage as an equal participant in the dialogues to facilitate the

teachers' professional growth. This proves that the partnership principles guided her on how she can work together with the (Knight 2007).

She was able to generate the trust with her teachers by working alongside with her teachers, giving them a choice on their learning and helping them find the words to say what they think of the ideas. She effectively made use of the conversation sessions to push her teachers to reflect on their practices and consider applying the new learning with their students. By doing all this, her teachers looked highly upon her capability, and by them allowing her to stroll into their classrooms, it proves that they had the trust that she will not be judgmental. Instead, they knew she was there to perceive how and what sort of help she should be able to offer, and that help will work with their students. The teachers had this confidence in the SISC+ because she was able to prove her genuine intentions through the partnership dialogues.

Despite being an experienced teacher, T1 was happy because coaching enabled her to grow and made her try things that she thought would not work to work. T2 seems to look up to SISC+ and values her as a friend as well as a professional. She further stressed that despite being much younger, the SISC+ was always very helpful. T3 believed that the SISC+ was able to "enhance [her] skill in problem analysis and strategic thinking," which is much needed for the coming generations since she has "another 24 [long] years" in the service (T3_ Int.). These teachers proved that they learnt and enjoyed the partnership learning journey with their SISC+ as experienced by the teachers in Knight's (2007) study. Therefore, these teachers believed coaching to be the window that will allow them to venture into new things and expand their view of teaching and learning. Conclusively, it proposes that the teachers perceived coaching to be like a mirror that helped them reflect on their practices and like a window that expanded their view of learning. They also collectively shared positive perceptions of the SISC+, who was ascribed to having excellent communication skills as well as being very helpful, which strengthened the bond between them.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the principles embraced by the SISC+ and coached English Language (EL) teachers in their workplaces, how they practice the principles in their coaching nature, and how the principles achieved collaborative teacher-SISC+ alliance. It was evident from the SISC+, and the three coached teachers' experiences and practices of coaching, that all of Knight's (2007) partnership principles were incorporated within these teacher-SISC+ coaching work. In addition, due to the incorporation of 'Equality,

Dialogue, Praxis, Reciprocity, Reflection, Choice and Voice,' in their coaching, the teachers opened their windows to welcome the SISC+ and the new learning brought by the SISC+. The principles not only welcomed teacher acceptance and enhanced teacher-SISC+ alliance but also made teacher learning possible. As evident by the participants, the use of all the seven Knight's principles of partnership, overwhelmed the learning experiences of the teachers and helped them to achieve praxis. The teachers were willing to dump out the old irrelevant practices and make room for new approaches brought in by the SISC+. This transparent that successful coaching collaboration incorporates the use of partnership principles. Teachers are to work directly with SISC+. Therefore, the way they feel about the SISC+, the nature of their environment could strongly affect their teaching. If the teachers feel that they have trusting, supportive and understanding relationships with the SISC+ who can help them be effective teachers, there is likely to be an impact on students' achievement. The results implicate that these principles must be learnt and understood by all the SISC+ as basic of coaching in obtaining teacher acceptance, build teacher-SISC+ collaborative relationships and support required changes in teachers' instructional practices and that will bring about astounding students' outcome.

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Zubaidah Bibi Mobarak Ali
English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC)
Email: zubaidah.mobarak@eltc.edu.my

Hamidah Yamat
Faculty of Education
National University of Malaysia
Email: hamidah_yamat@ukm.edu.my

Wahiza Wahi
Pusat Citra University
National University of Malaysia (UKM)
Email: wawa@ukm.edu.my

*Author for correspondence, email: hamidah_yamat@ukm.edu.my