Examining Teacher Leadership: Phenomenology of the Perceived Challenges of Being a Teacher Leader

Noelle H. Green
Minnesota State University Moorhead, noelle.green@go.mnstate.edu

Recommended Citation

Examining Teacher Leadership: Phenomenology of the Perceived Challenges of Being a Teacher Leader

Abstract

Today's school leaders recognize that one person, mainly the principal, cannot adequately address the needs of all members of the school community. Many principals rely on teacher leaders to lead alongside them to further school improvement, knowing that the traditional way of thinking of school leadership as being the sole role of the principal is no longer effective or efficient. While K-12 teachers typically have a strong background in child development, psychology, and pedagogy, many lack experience in leading and facilitating adults and have little background in adult learning theory.

The purpose of this research is to determine how K-12 teacher leaders perceive the challenges of leading and facilitating adults. Working within Knowles Andragogy Adult Learning Theory, this phenomenological qualitative study analyzed eight teacher leaders in North Dakota school districts. Data was collected through open-ended interview questions and analyzed through coding the transcriptions of the interviews. The data revealed the group descriptions of the challenges that teacher leaders face when working with adults. Recurring themes included a lack of preparation for a leadership role, a lack of clarity in the role, being treated differently by colleagues, the importance of establishing trust among colleagues, a lack of evaluative feedback from administrators, frustrations regarding authentic decision making, and obstacles faced when initiating change. The goal is that this study can be utilized to inform further research in the area of teacher leader development for both school districts and higher education institutions.

Keywords

Author Bio

Noelle Green, Ed.D. is a lifelong learner and educator in the K-12 education field. She has been an administrator in McKenzie County Public School District #1 in Watford City, ND since 2018 and currently serves as the Watford City Middle School Principal. Prior to her administrative roles, she was an middle school science teacher in Wahpeton, ND and Willmar, MN. During her time in the classroom, she served in many teacher leadership roles, including PLC leaders, grade-level lead teacher, and mentor. She also served as on many leadership committees, such as school improvement team, technology implementation team, and innovation team, as a teacher representative. Dr. Green holds a MN and ND 1-8 teaching license with a 5-8 science endorsement, a ND K-8 Administrator license, a MA in Curriculum and Instruction from Minnesota State University Moorhead, and a BA in Elementary Education with Middle Level Science Emphasis from Concordia College.

Introduction

The term *teacher leadership* is one that has become increasingly popular in education. "The concept of teacher leadership suggests that teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the ways schools operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 255). Most people familiar with the topic would agree that teacher leaders are educators who take on leadership roles in school but remain in the classroom with their students. Some responsibilities of teacher leaders include PLC leaders, department chairs, school improvement members, or mentors (Angelle, 2007; Angelle & DeHart, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Researchers widely agree on the need and benefits of teacher leaders. The opportunity for professional growth, the benefits on student achievement, and the need for teacher leaders due to the complexity and accountability of a principal's job are consistently discussed in the research (Angelle, 2007; Coquyt & Creasman, 2017; Muijs & Harris, 2007; Wilhelm, 2013; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

In addition, research widely agrees upon several challenges that teacher leaders face. For example, lack of time and resources, difficulty balancing roles, frustrations, and burnout are barriers that many teacher leaders face (Angelle, 2007; Berry, 2014; Harris, 2003; Margolis & Deuel, 2009). Other factors that inhibit teacher leadership include poor relationships with peers or administration, poor communication, school climate, and resistance to change (Angelle, 2007; Muijs & Harris, 2007). Researchers also commonly agreed on teacher leaders being chosen by principals, but some warn to use caution (Angelle, 2007; Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Harris & Kemp-Graham, 2017). Teacher leaders should be chosen by skill and ability, not tenure. Administrators must choose teacher leaders based on the skills of each individual and how it aligns with the needs of the school, rather than on

tenure alone (Angelle, 2007; Coquyt & Creasman, 2017). Additionally, principals must be careful not to run to the same teachers for leadership opportunities, as it limits leadership opportunities to only a few individuals and can lead to burnout for the teacher leaders.

When analyzing the literature, there were three main themes that described teacher leadership. The first theme is that teacher leaders should support professional learning in their schools, such as leading PLCs, conducting professional development, or assisting other teachers in classrooms. A second theme is that teacher leaders should be involved in school-wide decision making, specifically involving school-improvement initiatives. The third theme that arose from the literature is that the ultimate goal of teacher leadership is improving student learning and success.

While there is plenty of literature on the general topic of teacher leadership, limited literature can be found regarding teacher leadership and adult learning theory. Most of the research found in the literature focuses on Domains 4 and 5 of the Teacher Leader Model Standards (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008), shown in Table 1. These domains focus on instruction, assessments, and the use of data to drive instruction. At the time of research, little literature could be found on Domains 1 and 3, which focuses on fostering a collaborative culture to support development of teachers and promoting professional learning for continuous improvement (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008). The knowledge and application of adult learning theory is imperative if teacher leaders are going to find success in Domains 1 and 3 of the TLMS.

Table 1

Seven Domains of the Teacher Leader Model Standards

Domain 1	Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning
Domain 2	Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning
Domain 3	Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement
Domain 4	Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning
Domain 5	Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement
Domain 6	Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community
Domain 7	Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

Note. Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2008

Statement of the Problem

Today's school leaders recognize that one person, mainly the principal, cannot adequately address the needs of all members of the school community. Many principals rely on teacher leaders to lead alongside them to further school improvement initiatives (Angelle, 2007), knowing that the traditional way of thinking of school leadership as being the sole role of the principal is no longer effective or efficient. Leadership must be distributed among administrative leaders, teachers, and policy makers (Devine & Alger, 2011). Principals' and teachers' roles as instructional leaders are interdependent and imperative to the success of schools (Angelle, 2007; Kurtz, 2007).

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this research is to examine how K-12 teacher leaders experience the challenges of leading and facilitating adults. The study provides administrators and aspiring teacher leaders with the knowledge of how teacher leaders perceive the challenges of working

with adult learners. The data collected in this qualitative study provides useful information that can benefit not only the participants, but school administrators and higher education institutions. This study is unique from most research on teacher leadership in that the content focus is on describing the experiences of current teacher leaders, rather than on the transition from classroom teacher to teacher leader. A major premise of this study is that school systems have a responsibility to promote, enhance, and support teacher leaders to attain a positive school culture, improvements in instructional practices, and increased student success.

The central question within this research is:

1. How do teacher leaders perceive the challenges of working with adults in comparison to teaching students?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because of its direct application into K-12 school systems. The data gathered from the interview participants gives insight to school administrators, school board members, and higher education institutions on the perspectives and needs of teacher leaders. The increased understanding of the needs of current teacher leaders may lead to improved job satisfaction and better teacher retention rates, which is a major area of concern in many western North Dakota school districts (Hall & Clapper, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative research adapted Knowles' Adult Learning Theory to guide the phenomenological study of the experiences of teacher leaders. Adult Learning Theory is the theoretical framework that provides the context for the teacher leader interview questions for the eight North Dakota teacher leaders. Adult Learning Theory has been widely used in the

education field, often regarding higher education, adult or community education, and professional development.

Using the principal of andragogy, the art and science of adult learning, Knowles (1980) made four assumptions of critical considerations for learners. This model, known as Adult Learning Theory, has since been expanded to six ideas that focus on adults as the learner rather than the teacher (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

Many teachers have a thorough understanding of pedagogy, the art and science of teaching children. Historically, the pedagogical model was the only existing educational model. Therefore, the entire educational system of schools, including higher education, was stuck in this model, meaning that adults were mainly taught as if they were children (Knowles et al., 2005). In the pedagogical model, the teacher takes full responsibility for making all decisions about what is learned, how it is learned, when it is learned, and if it has been learned. This left the learner in a submissive role, simply following the teacher's instructions (Knowles et al., 2005). The problem with practicing pedagogy with adults is that natural maturity decreases the need for dependency, creating a gap between the need and the ability to be self-directing. This gap produces tension, resistance, resentment, and rebellion in the adult learners (Knowles et al., 2005). Figure 1 below provides a summary of the andragogical model, displaying the six core adult learning principals surrounded by the context of individual and situational differences. Also included are the goals and purposes for learning, including societal growth, institutional growth, and personal growth.
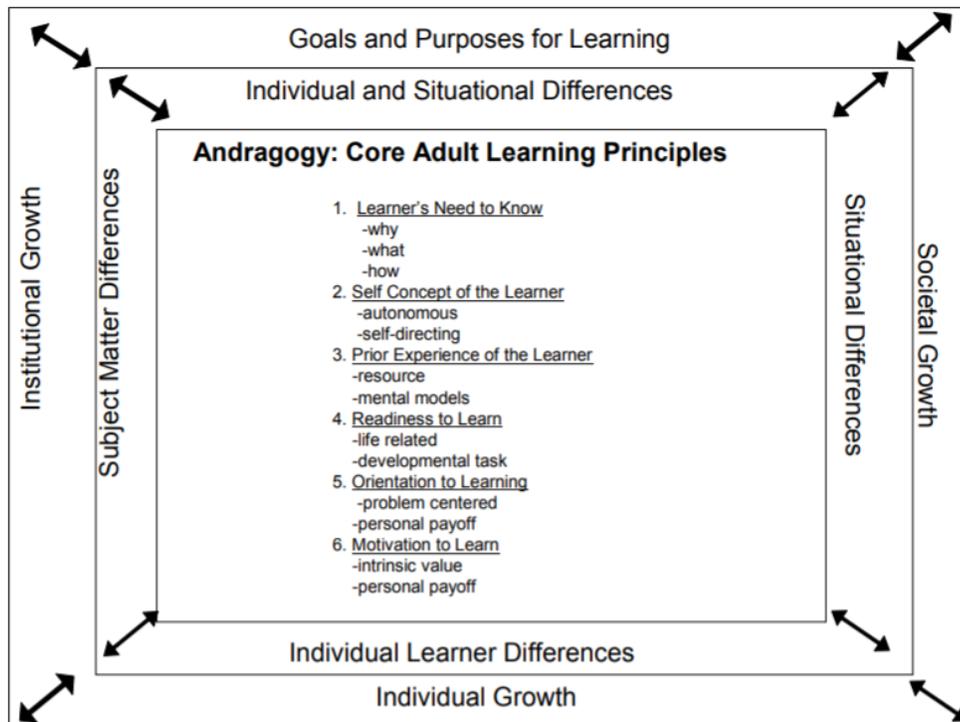
Figure 1. Andragogy in practice. (Knowles et al., 1998) as cited in Knowles et al., 2005

Method

Due to the need for inquiry into the perceptions of teacher leaders, a qualitative

approach was used for this study. The perceptions of teacher leaders on the challenges of

leading and facilitating adults was expected to vary, so the use of a qualitative approach

allowed the phenomenon to be fully studied by the researcher. The perspective that "all

human life is experienced and constructed from a subjective perspective" (Briggs et al., 2012,

p. 23) led to this study employing a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm. Through the lens of

social constructivism framework, multiple realities were constructed through one's lived

experiences and interactions with others (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and allowed the participants

to "provide rich descriptions of phenomena that enhance understanding" of the research topic

(MacMillan, 2012, p. 18).

More specifically, the phenomenological approach was used in this study, as the study focused on describing the common challenges teacher leaders face. Phenomenological research is defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2013) as a "method that attempts to understand participants' perspectives and views of social realities" (p. 100). In phenomenological studies, participants describe an experience as he or she is living or has lived (Briggs et al., 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to investigate and collect data through the perceptions of current teacher leaders.

In this study, the researcher's interests lied in the participants' description of the phenomenon and not the researcher's own explanation of the phenomenon. According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007), "quantitative research is not apt for answering why and how questions. In contract, qualitative research can address such process-oriented questions" (p. 559). Based on this information, the researcher believed that a qualitative design best answered the how and why questions the researcher used to study the phenomenon about the challenges teacher leaders face when leading and facilitating adults.

Participant Selection

For teacher leaders to qualify to be a participant in this study, they had to be a current K-12 teacher leader who also spends at least 80% of their day in the classroom. The 80% – 20% classroom ratio was chosen as a suggestion from Bagley and Margolis (2018). Demographics such as years of experience or highest degree attained were not considerations for the inclusion of participants. While teachers in positions of instructional coaches or curriculum specialists are often referred to as teacher leaders, they were excluded as

participants for this study as they do not maintain their classroom-based teaching responsibilities.

The participants in this study consisted of eight teacher leaders who continue to teach in the classroom 80% or more of the time. The participants were current classroom teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels with leadership roles as grade level lead teachers, PLC leaders, or department chairs. The participants chosen for this study were selected based on volunteer sampling.

The interviews began in July of 2020. The researcher met with the participants via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were recorded in order to create a transcription of the interview. The interview questions, found in Appendix A, pertained to demographic information and the challenges they faced as teacher leaders when facilitating adults. While the data being collected was primarily through individual, semi-structured interviews, the researcher was also including gestures and body language of the participants as part of the data being collected. Once the data had been collected, each interview recording was transcribed by the researcher using the word processing software, Trint.

It is important to note that at the time of the interviews in July of 2020, the world was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools in North Dakota had closed in mid-March of 2020 and the impacts of the closure was still fresh on the participants' minds. Many of the participants answered the interview questions based on how things were prior to the COVID-19 school closure, but some answered based on their experiences during the closure. The experiences of the COVID-19 closure were unique to each participant and may have had an impact on the findings in this study.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Characteristics	Number
Gender	
Male	3
Female	5
Teaching Position	
Elementary School	2
Middle School	5
High School	1
Highest Degree Attained	
Bachelors	5
Masters	3
Years of Teaching Range	5-29 years
Leadership Position	
Grade Level Lead Teacher	7
Leadership Team Member	5
School Improvement Team Member	4
Mentor Teacher	5
Department Chair/PLC Leader	2
Years in Leadership Range	2-14 years

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected through on-on-one interviews that took place over Zoom due to COVID-19 precautions. The researcher used the Zoom recording features to record the interviews. Prior to the beginning of the interview, the researcher obtained consent from the participants using an IRB approved consent form. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher used the Trint software to transcribe the interviews verbatim. Once the interviews had been transcribed, the transcription was sent to each participant to ensure validity of the participants' answers. This type of member checking allowed the participants to make any necessary changes, clarify the responses, or agree with the transcript. There were no changes made to the transcripts by the participants during the member checking process.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection process was complete, the researcher began the data analysis process using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach. Moustakas's (1994) approach was utilized because of its systematic steps in the data analysis procedures (Creswell & Poth. 2018). The general procedure included preparing data for analysis, reducing the data phenomenologically, engaging in imaginative variation, and uncovering the essence of the experience (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). . Figure 2 provides a visual of Moustakas' approach.
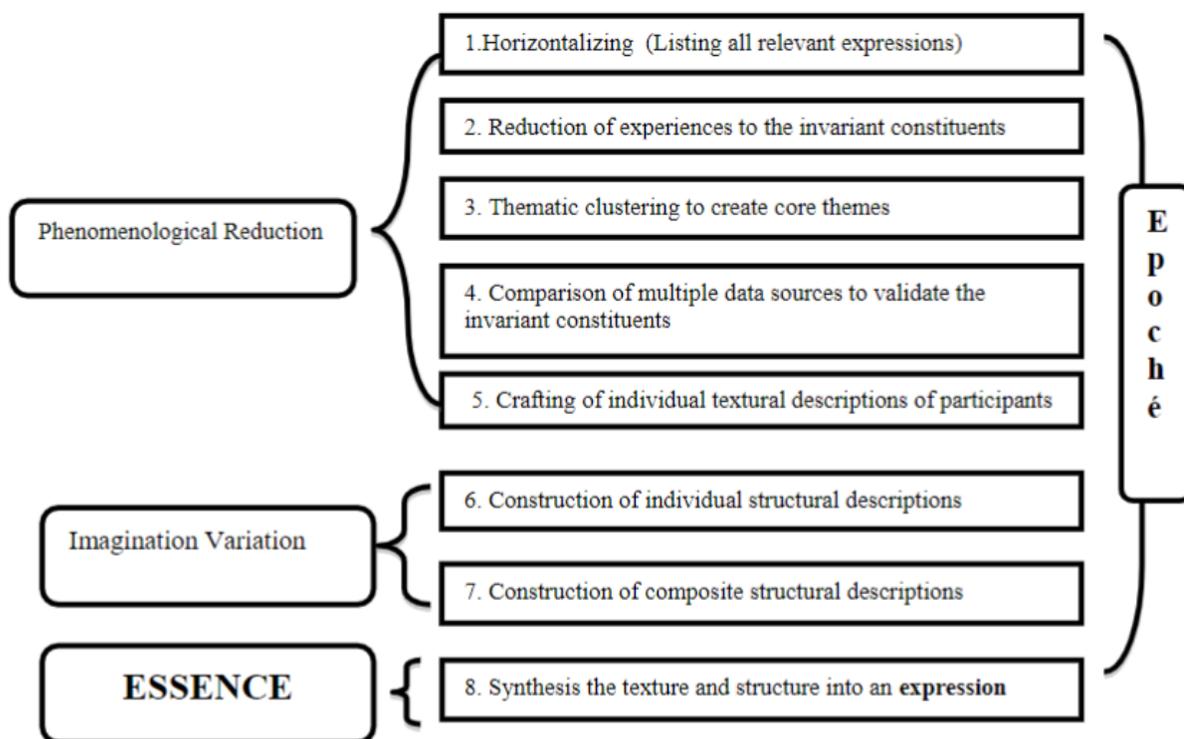

Figure 2. The steps of data analysis (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

After completing the epoché process to set aside her personal experiences with the phenomenon (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015), the researcher began the phenomenological reduction process, starting with horizontalizing. The researcher started with the verbatim

transcripts of the participants and deleted any irrelevant expressions, leaving the horizons, or significant statements, of the phenomenon to emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Then, the researcher reduced the horizons into themes. Each theme had only one meaning, which provided the foundation for interpretation by creating clusters and removing repetition. The researcher utilized the Quirkos (www.quirkos.com) software program to aide in the phenomenological reduction process. The Quirkos software helps visually organize the words of the participants by dragging and dropping significant statements onto colorful bubbles that grow as data is added. Quirkos also has features like keyword searches, side-by-side comparisons of subgroups, and visualizations that show connections in the data.

After creating the themes, the researcher constructed textural descriptions of the participants' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon using verbatim excerpts from the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). Next, the researcher constructed structural descriptions by using imaginative variation to describe how the experience happened by reflecting on the setting and context. Finally, the researcher synthesized the textural and structural descriptions into a composite description of the phenomenon, also known as the essence of the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015).

Results

Research Question

The research question in this study was: How do teacher leaders perceive the challenges of working with adults in comparison to teaching students? The research question

examined the experience of how teacher leaders perceive the challenges of working with adults in comparison to teaching students. Participants reported:

a) Lack of education, training, or preparation

b) Lack of clarity in the role

c) Negative treatment from other teachers

d) Navigating how to lead adults

e) Lack of feedback from administrators

f) Navigating authentic decision-making opportunities, and

g) Obstacles initiating change

The composite textural description focused on a group description of the phenomenon of the challenges of teacher leaders when working with adults. Using the themes discussed above, the data revealed the group descriptions of the challenges that teacher leaders face when working with adults. Recurring themes included a lack of preparation for a leadership role, a lack of clarity in the role, being treated differently by colleagues, the importance of establishing trust among colleagues, a lack of evaluative feedback from administrators, frustrations regarding authentic decision making, and obstacles faced when initiating change.

The researcher applied the process of imaginative variation to construct a composite structural description by integrating all the individual participant's descriptions into one comprehensive, universal structural description of the challenges that teacher leaders face when working with adults. Through the data analysis process, the researcher identified that participants felt as though they were thrown into the deep end once they accepted the position of teacher leader. Participants also felt there was a lack of direction with the role and reported feelings of isolation or that they were a glorified complaint box. Participants shared the

importance of how they communicate with teachers and their frustrations about the lack of guidance from administrators. There was also discussion regarding the lack of authentic decision-making opportunities at the district level. Finally, the participants discussed at length the frustrations they share when teachers are reluctant to change.

Stepping into a teacher leadership role requires teachers to straddle the line between colleague and supervisor. The participants accepted a leadership position because they strived to improve the education of their students. However, the participants were not well-prepared for the role, feeling like they were thrown into the deep end and wished the best of luck. This also led to a lack of clarity and direction, which created feelings of isolation or that they were used solely for teachers to complain to.

Since there was a lack of clarity and direction for teacher leaders, it makes sense that there was also a lack of evaluative feedback from administrators regarding the teacher leadership role. The participants had to navigate how to communicate with teachers on their own, often leaning on their personal experiences with students and attempting to translate that to adults. Frustrations then occurred when the participants felt that they were not involved in district-wide, authentic decision-making opportunities. This especially became true when there was a change initiative, and the teacher leaders took on an active role with their colleagues. The participants were tasked with dealing with reluctance from teachers and worked to influence their colleagues in changing their practices for the benefit of the students. Overall, the participants' experiences centered around the challenges of navigating the aspects of leadership, such as communication and initiating change, while also ensuring they were not taking on any evaluative roles.

Discussion

Early in the interview process, the researcher uncovered behaviors and attitudes towards teacher leadership that were anticipated. One example would be the need to establish trust between the teacher leader and the teachers they work with. All participants discussed how a trusting relationship was crucial to finding success as a teacher leader. This mirrors previous literature, especially in regard to how trust impacts school culture. Crowther et al., (2009) state that principals who step back to allow teacher leaders to step forward encourages their work and creates opportunities to further develop the leadership capabilities of teacher leaders. This trust is imperative as it allows teacher leaders to step out of the "my hands are tied" culture that was commonly felt during the No Child Left Behind era (Kajitani, 2015). Trust is built when administrators give teacher leaders an opportunity to voice their opinions and be involved in the decision-making process (Angelle & DeHart, 2011), which ultimately leads to better decisions being made for the improvement of schools (Ruff, 2003), the creation of professional learning environments (Jackson et al., 2010), and an enhancement of teacher leadership throughout the school (Angelle & DeHart, 2011).

Another example would be the importance of using communication skills, specifically active listening skills. These skills allow teacher leaders to have difficult yet important conversations to promote growth among the teachers and to improve teaching practices to positively impact students. While this does not refute research, the focus in previous research tends to highlight skills like decision-making, identifying needs of others, leading discussions, and managing conflict. Many of these skills require effective communication skills, but communication skills were rarely overtly mentioned.

While some of the answers were anticipated based on previous studies and literature, which was discussed in Chapter 2, there were also many perceptions of teacher leaders that were unanticipated. One example of this would be the complete absence of the Teacher Leader Model Standards. None of the participants mentioned the TLMS, leading one to believe that the teacher leaders were either unaware of their existence or that there was no emphasis placed on their importance. This is a difficult idea to fathom, as the TLMS give such specific guidance to the role of teacher leader, even though individual schools may have different needs and expectations for their teacher leaders.

Another unanticipated perception of teacher leaders was some of the participants' reluctance to accept a teacher leadership role. While previous literature discussed this topic, participants in this study discussed that the reasoning for the reluctance was because they were not on an administration track for their career goals, which was not discussed in the previous literature. Many of the participants seemed to combine the roles of administrators with the role of teacher leaders or treated them as though they are one in the same. In reality, the role of a teacher leader could not be more different from the role of an administrator. The participants eluded to hard work with leadership skills; however, hard work does not always translate to the leadership skills needed for administration.

Finally, the participants relied heavily on seeking their own research and resources to prepare themselves for a teacher leadership role. While many in leadership roles tend to do this, it was shocking that none of the participants mentioned reaching out to their administrators for suggestions on professional development. It makes one question how much administrators actually know about teacher leadership. In addition, none of the participants mentioned searching for or using any research regarding how adults learn or how to lead

adults. It seems ironic that teachers, who are often so good at finding ways to teach children, did not consider research-based practices on how to facilitate adults and relied more on experience. Therefore, this research validated the need for education or professional development on adult learning for teachers moving into a leadership role.

When reflecting upon the conclusions, specifically listening, authentic decision-making, life experience, and motivation, one can easily make connections to Knowles' Adult Learning Theory. While the conclusions align with findings from previous studies, it is alarming how few studies discuss the assumptions of adult learning. Even the studies that do discuss adult learning theory do so minimally. It is fascinating that so many studies elude to the principles of adult learning, yet it is never at the forefront of any study. When asked about preparedness for a teacher leader position, the participants in this study that had completed or were currently in a master's program had mentioned that their courses helped to prepare them for working with adults. While specific information was not gathered regarding the content of these classes, one could hypothesize that graduate courses provide some level of instruction on adult learning theory. Unfortunately, not all teacher leaders have the opportunity of taking graduate level courses, and one does not often see professional development opportunities that are highly focused on adult learning. Also, no information has been presented in prior research or in this study to show that undergraduate teacher programs provide any courses or information on andragogy.

Another common theme from the findings in this study and from previous literature is that there is not only a lack of training or professional development, but also a lack of feedback from administrators regarding teachers' leadership roles. A possible explanation for this lack of feedback is because of the administrator's lack of vision for teacher leadership.

Coquyt (2019) implored administrators to share their vision with every teacher in the school prior to teacher leaders beginning their work. Additionally, administrators should work with teacher leaders to develop a teacher leader plan, using the TLMS, so that both parties understand the responsibilities, expectations, and duties of the teacher leader (Coquyt, 2019). Unfortunately, this seems to be something that rarely happens. As one can hypothesize, this lack of vision will hinder the full potential of teacher leaders.

Before administrators can provide feedback to teacher leaders, both teacher leaders and administrators must know what they are being evaluated on and how they can grow as leaders. The TLMS are a great tool for administrators to use to help foster growth in teacher leaders. What was concerning from the findings is the lack of knowledge of their existence. This possibly explains the lack of evaluative feedback. There is little mention in previous literature about evaluative tool for teacher leaders, leading one to believe that most administrators are not completing teacher leader evaluations because of a lack of knowledge rather than simple laziness. Although the TLMS have been around for over a decade, there is shockingly little references made to them in the previous literature on teacher leadership. In addition, none of the participants referenced the TLMS, causing one to assume that the participants did not know of their existence. With the increasing need of teacher leaders, one would think that the TLMS would be as well-known as the Marshall or Marzano evaluation tools used for classroom teaching. To further build off this conclusion, administrators and teacher leaders should focus on principles of adult learning, as it is a major component of Domains 1 and 3 of the TLMS (Appendix A). Without feedback from administrators to teacher leaders on the TLMS, "the full potential of utilizing teacher leaders will not be realized" (Coquyt, 2019). For schools to see the full benefits of teacher leadership, there must

be more than a title; training, mentoring, and feedback focused on the TLMS and adult learning theory assumptions must be provided to teacher leaders.

Conclusion

This study functions as a qualitative research endeavor to address the challenges teacher leaders face and how school administrators can use this information to better support teacher leaders. This study has added to the literature on teacher leadership by providing a deeper understanding of the phenomena of the challenges that teacher leaders face when leading and facilitating adults. Teacher leaders, regardless of their exact leadership duties or titles, face many challenges when working with adults. The challenges of working with adults can be segregated into two different categories. First, teacher leaders face challenges with leading and facilitating other teachers. This is especially true when trying to facilitate change in the school. The second category is based on the challenges teacher leaders face when working with administrators. Although teacher leaders may not necessarily be leading or facilitating administrators, they do face challenges when working with their administration, such as a lack of vision and feedback.

As stated previously, teachers often get a significant amount of training on pedagogy and how to teach children. While this is certainly of utmost importance, an argument can be made that training on andragogy is just as important, especially when one takes into consideration how dramatically the teaching profession as changed. Teaching is more collaborative than ever before; therefore, andragogy is in many ways just as important as pedagogy, and attention must be given to providing training on adult learning theory to teachers.

Through information gathered from this study and previous literature, it is clear that the role of teacher leader is quite unique. First, there are a variety of roles teacher leaders can take on, such as department chair, school improvement team member, PLC leader, or mentor, and many teacher leaders take on more than one of these roles. The skills needed to be successful in these roles may vary depending on school needs and the vision of the administrator.

As seen from the results, it is imperative that administrators provide expectations and responsibilities to their teacher leaders if they are to reap the benefits of teacher leadership. Unfortunately, the data shows this is not always taking place. The lack of expectations, in conjunction with a lack of training or professional development, leads to teacher leaders relying on their own experiences or looking for their own resources. However, the skills that often make great teachers do not always translate to having great leadership skills. While their self-driven motivation is inspiring, one has to ask how beneficial this is when the teacher leaders do not have a clear idea of what is expected of them. How many teacher leaders are looking for answers in the wrong places? Additionally, there seems to be a sense of guilt from teacher leaders who accept leadership roles when they have no desire to go into administration. Even though teacher leaders and administrators have drastically different roles, teacher leaders are still viewed by many as a pipeline into the administrative world. In reality, very few people who are interested in taking on leadership responsibilities have a desire to go into administration.

Ultimately, the data gathered from this study and results from previous studies lead one to believe that the overarching issues is that both administrators and teacher leaders don't know what they don't know. It is a vicious cycle of teacher leaders not knowing their job

duties and looking for feedback, but administrators are unable to give feedback because of a lack of a metric. Rather than teacher leaders and administrators playing a never-ending game of trial and error, both parties must become educated in the principles of adult learning theory and the TLMS.

There are many ways this research may benefit or be used by professionals in the education field, including the K-12 education realm, higher education institutions, and fields outside of education. At the K-12 education level, it is imperative that superintendents, principals, and directors have a solid understanding of adult learning theory. These principles must be taught to teachers who are moving into a teacher leadership role. For example, the principles of adult learning theory could be embedded into onboarding sessions, or teacher leaders would have to have some sort of training or professional development in adult learning theory prior to accepting a teacher leadership role. By K-12 administrations providing education on adult learning theory, the capacity for leadership in the school has the potential to dramatically increase.

This research can also be used by higher education institutions to determine how principles of adult learning theory and teacher leadership can be implemented into both undergraduate and graduate programs. Some graduate programs offer courses in adult learning theory, but the courses are not always required, or the scope of the course is often narrow. It is recommended that the principles of adult learning theory are revisited in many courses throughout graduate programs so future leaders have a concrete understanding of how to use the andragogy principles. Higher education institutions should also highly consider embedding adult learning principles into undergraduate courses. With the teaching profession being more collaborative in each passing year, new teachers must understand how adults learn

and not focus solely on pedagogy. Adding courses on andragogy at the undergraduate level would also give teachers a broader perspective on how learning changes as humans grow and develop.

Finally, while there are obvious implications for the education field, the results from this research can be used in other fields as well. The results from this study showing the need for training in adult learning theory can be easily be applied in any field where adults are tasks with leading or facilitating adults outside of an administrative position. The principles of adult learning theory are not specific to education; therefore, administrators in any field should have a firm knowledge of andragogy to see the maximum benefit for their organization.

References

Angelle, P. S. (2007). Teachers as leaders: Collaborative leadership for learning
communities. *Middle School Journal*, *38*(3), 54–61. Retrieved from
https://login.trmproxy.mnpals.net/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direc
d=true&db=ehh&AN=24600823&site=ehost-live

Angelle, P. S., & DeHart, C. A. (2011). Teacher perceptions of teacher leadership: Examining
differences by experience, degree, and position. *NASSP Bulletin, 95*(141), 141–160.
doi:10.1177/01926365114155397

Bagley, S. S., & Margolis, J. (2018). The emergence and failure to launch of hybrid teacher
leadership. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership, 9*(1), 33–46.

Baldwin, T. T., Magjuka, R. J., & Loher, B. T. (1991). The perils of participation: Effects of
choice of training on trainee motivation and learning. *Personnel Psychology, 44*, 51-65.

Bassett, K., Kajitani, A., & Stewart, P. (2014). Teacher leaders: Not just a buzz phrase,
Instructor, *124*(3), p. 36–39.

Berry, B. (2014). Clearing the way for teacher leadership. *Education Week, 34*(9), 20–21.
Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/10/22/09Berry.h34.html

Briggs, A. R. J., Coleman, M., & Morrison, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Research methods in educational
leadership & management.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Clark, C. S., Dobbins, G. H., & Ladd, R. T. (1993). Exploratory field study of training
motivation. *Group and Organization Management, 18,* 292-307.

Chun, H. (2013). *Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method* [Diagram]. https://boomer
womaned.wordpress.com/2013/07/05/a-brief-introduction-to-the-techniques-used-in-
phenomenological-research/

Coleman, M. (2012). Interviews. In A. R. J. Briggs, M. Coleman, & M. Morrison (Eds.),
Research methods in educational leadership & management (pp. 250–265). Thousand
Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Coquyt, M. (2019). *Experiencing teacher leadership: Perceptions and insights from first-year
teacher leaders.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Coquyt, M., & Creasman, B. (2017). *Growing leaders within: A process toward teacher
leadership.* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Cosenza, M. N. (2015). Defining teacher leadership. *Issues in Teacher Education, 24*(2), 79–99.

Coyle, M. (1997). Teacher leadership vs. school management: Flatten the hierarchies. *Clearing
House, 70*(5), 236–239.

Creasman, B. & Coquyt, M. (2016). *The leader within: Understanding and empowering teacher
leaders*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among
five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods
approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crowther, F., Ferguson, M., & Hann, L. (2009). *Developing teacher leaders: How teacher
leadership enhances school success* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Educational
Leadership, 55*(5), 6–11.

Devine, J., & Alger, G. (2011). Teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles of middle school
principals and instructional leaders. *Academic Leadership*, *9*(4).

Frymier, J. (1987). Bureaucracy and the neutering of teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan, 69*, 9–16.

Gilles, C., Wang, Y., Fish, J., & Stegall, J. (2018). "I learned by watching my mentor." Nurturing teacher leadership with an induction program. *Mentoring & Tutoring, 26*(4), 455–475. doi: 10.1080/13611267.2018.1530174

Hall, T., & Clapper, A. (2016). North Dakota's experience with the academy model: A successful replication. *Educational Considerations*, *43*(4), 54–59. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1116654.pdf

Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership as distributed leadership: Heresy, fantasy or possibility? *School Leadership and Management, 23*(3), 313–324. doi: 10.1080/1363243032000112801

Harris, A. (2005). Teacher leadership: More than just a feel-good factor? *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 4*, 201–219.

Harris, D. R., & Kemp-Graham, K. Y. (2017). The relationship between building teacher leadership capacity and campus culture. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research, 5*, 49–73.

Harrison, C., & Killion, J. (2007). Ten Roles for Teacher Leaders. *Educational Leadership, 65*(1), 74–77.

Hicks, W. D., & Klimoski, R. J. (1987). Entry into training programs and its effects on training outcomes: A field experiment. *Academy of Management Journal, 30,* 542-552.

Hunzicker, J. (2012). Professional development and job-embedded collaboration: How teachers learn to exercise leadership. *Professional Development in Education, 38*(2), 267–289. DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2012.657870

Jackson, T., Burrus, J., Bassett, K., Roberts, R. D., & Educational Testing Service. (2010). Teacher Leadership: An Assessment Framework for an Emerging Area of Professional

Practice. Research Report. ETS RR-10-27. In Educational Testing Service. Educational Testing Service.

Kajitani, A. (2015). How do you know whether you're a teacher leader? *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 51*(3), 121–125. DOI: 10.1080/00228958.2015.1056663

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2009). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Helping teachers develop as leaders* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The Modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (6th ed.)*.* Burlington, MA: Elsevier.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner* (5th ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf.

Kolb, D. A. (1981). Experiential learning theory and the learning style inventory: A reply to Freedman and Stumpf. *Academy of Management Review, 6,* 289-296.

Kurtz, S. (2009). Teacher LEADERSHIP. *Leadership*, *39*(1), 12–38. Retrieved from https://login.trmproxy.mnpals.net/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direc d=true&db=ehh&AN=44387695&site=ehost-live

Lambert, L. (2002). A framework for shared leadership. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 37-40.

Leech, N., & Onwuegbuzie, A. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Journal Quarterly, 22*(4), doi: 10.1037/1045-3830.22.4.557

Leedy, P., & Ormrod, J. (2013). *Practical research: Planning and design* (10th Ed). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Lieberman, A., & Friedrich, L. D. (2010). *How teachers become leaders: Learning from practice and research*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Lumpkin, A., Claxton, H., & Wilson, A. (2014). Key characteristics of teacher leaders in schools. *Administrative Issues Journal: Education, Practice & Research, 4*(2), 59–67. https://doi-org.trmproxy.mnpals.net/10.5929/2014.4.2.8

MacMillan, J. (2012). *Educational research. Fundamentals for the consumer* (6th Ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson

Margolis, J. (2012). Hybrid teacher leaders and the new professional development ecology. *Professional Development in Education, 38*(2), 291–315. DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2012.657874

Margolis, J., & Deuel, A. (2009). Teacher leaders in action: Motivation, morality, and money. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 8,* 264–286. DOI: 10.1080/15700760802416115

MetLife, Inc. (2013). *The Metlife survey of the American teacher: Challenges for school leadership*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Retrieved from https://www.metlife.com/assets/cao/foundation/MetLife-Teacher-Survey-2012.pdf

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Muijs, D., & Harris, A. (2007). Teacher leadership in (in)action. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *35*(1), 111–134. Retrieved from https://doi-org.trmproxy.mnpals.net/ 10.1177/1741143207071387

Pellicer, L. O. & Anderson, L. W. (1995). *A handbook for teacher leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Quirkos 2.3.1 [Computer Software]. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.quirkos.com

Roby, D. E. (2011). Teacher leaders impacting school culture. *Education*, *131*(4), 782–790. Retrieved from https://login.trmproxy.mnpals.net/login?url=http://search. ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=61803698&site=ehost-liv

Ruff, K. G. (2003). *How three North Carolina elementary principals influenced the culture of their school using the comer school development program: Creating shared vision toward school improvement.* (Doctoral dissertation).

Schlossberg, N. K. (1981). A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition. *The Counseling Psychologist, 9*(2), 2–18. doi:10.1177/01926365114155397

Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review, 57*(1), 1–22.

Silva, D. Y., Gimbert, B., & Nolan, J. (2000). Sliding the doors: Locking and unlocking possibilities for teacher leadership. *Teachers College Record, 102*(4), 779–804.

Smith, C. (2017). The Unsuspecting Teacher Leader. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 84*(2), 19–22.

Taylor, M., Goeke, J., Klein, E., Onore, C., & Geist, K. (2011). Changing leadership: Teachers lead the way for schools that learn. *Teaching and Teaching Education, 27,* 920–929. DOI: 10.1016/j.tate.2011.03.003

Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium. (2008). *Teacher leader model standards.* Retrieved from https://www.ets.org/s/education_topics/teaching_quality/pdf/teacher_leader_model _standards.pdf

Wasley, P. (1991). *Teachers who lead*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Wenner, J. A., & Campbell, T. (2017). The theoretical and empirical basis of teacher leadership: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(1), 134–171.

Wilhelm, T. (2013). How principals cultivate shared leadership. *Educational Leadership, 71*(2), 62–66. Retrieved from https://login.trmproxy.mnpals.net/login?url=http:// search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1043779&site=ehost-live

Wilson, B. (2015). On the edge of the dark side: Self-concept and the teacher-leader. *Independent School, 74*(4), 77–79.

Wilson, M. (1993). The search for teacher leaders. *Educational Leadership*, *50*(6), 26.

Wlodowski, R. J. (1985). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Yarger, S. J., & Lee, O. (1994). The development and sustenance of instructional leadership. In D. R. Walling (Ed.), *Teacher as leaders: Perspectives on the professional development of teachers* (pp. 223–237). Bloomington, IN: Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research*, *74*(3), 255–316. Retrieved from https://login.trmproxy.mnpals.net/login?url=http://search. ebscohost.com/ login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=15196040&site=ehost-live

Yüksel, P., & Yildirim, S. (2015). Theoretical frameworks, methods, and procedures for conducting phenomenological studies in educational setting. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(1), pp. 1–17. doi:10.17569/tojqi.59813

APPENDIX A.　　INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Noelle Green

Interviewee:

Position of interview:

Brief Description of Project:

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the perception of K-12 teacher leaders regarding the challenges of leading and facilitating adults. The primary focus will be on the experiences of the teacher leader in leading adults through the framework of Knowles Andragogy Adult Learning Theory and how their experiences differ from educational pedagogy used when working with students.

Interview Questions

1. Demographic Information

    a. Teaching Position & School/District:

    b. Leadership Position:

    c. Years Taught:

    d. Highest Degree Attained (specific):

    e. Years in a leadership position:

    f. Years in current district:

2. How would you define your role as a teacher leader? Please explain

3. Explain the process of coming into the role of a teacher leader? (Is this still the practice) (Did you accept the position reluctantly or excitedly)

4. What was your motivation to become a teacher leader? (Long term goals?)

5. How often do you get opportunities to make authentic decisions that affect or impact your grade level, school, or district? Please explain.

6. How have you been provided opportunities to learn and develop skills needed to be school leaders? Please explain.

7. How involved has your principal or administrator been in the process of developing you as a teacher leader? Please explain.

8. How often does your administrator discuss your performance as a teacher leader? Please explain.

9. How were you prepared to teach or facilitate adults compared to how you were prepared to each students/children? Please explain.

10. What are some of the most important things you have learned about teaching adults? Please explain.

11. What obstacles do you encounter when teaching adults, and how do you overcome them? Please explain.

12. Have you ever felt that you were treated differently by your co-workers/other teachers because you are in a teacher leadership role? Please explain.

13. How has your idea of teaching and learning changed over the course of your life, from being a new teacher working mostly with your students, to your teacher leadership roles, where you are now working with students and adults? Please explain.