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Teacher Leaders' Experiences and Perceptions from Program to Practice

Carolynn Stoddard

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Teacher Leaders' Experiences and Perceptions from Program to Practice

Carolynn Stoddard

Doctor of Education

in

Teacher Leadership

in the

Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

2020

Chair: Dr. Raynice Jean-Sigur

Advisory Committee: Dr. Mark Warner, and Dr. Anna Hart

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Dedication

For you, Mom.

You are my reason—my everything.

Yours affectionately,

B.

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Abstract

Most studies dedicated to investigating teacher leadership has focused on the impact teacher leaders (TLs) have with professional development and enhancing other teachers' performances or conquering a school's improvement plan. Few studies have set out to explore the impact preparatory teacher leadership programs have on the TLs. There is also a minimal amount of studies discussing the influence TLs feel they are having at their schools and the effects of becoming a teacher leader. This qualitative survey study focused on the first-hand experiences of seven pre-K-12th grade TLs within the southeastern region of the United States. The method of data collection involved an open-ended survey. Data analysis was accomplished through the identification of categories and emerging themes, relationships, summarizations, and comparisons of the different views of the participants. The two most prominent themes that emerged from the data were defining teacher leadership roles and the intrinsic motivation of TLs within the confines of restrictive educational norms of established positions. A result of this research includes an adaptation of five steps to the previously formed steps of effective TL initiatives within schools. Concluding that all levels within the education system, from state agencies to classroom teachers, should align with each other to create a consistent guide which will result in TLs assisting their schools with more relevant skills and resources that can be authentically implemented and redelivered with their staff.

Keywords: Teacher Leaders, Teacher Leadership, Program Development, Graduate Programs

Chapter 1 Introduction

The era where leadership was an in-service of school administrators is long gone. Nonetheless, the pervasive opinion of the principal as the only one with the mandate to provide leadership in schools is inadequate and progressively complex owing to the current expectations of responsibility and student learning outcomes (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). The implication of teacher leadership for institutions has been realized not just through mutual leadership prototypes but also in learning environments that are empowering. Nevertheless, the lack of a perfect model of teacher leadership curtails shared action to proficiently transform schools and enhance student learning.

According to Fairman and Mackenzie (2015), teacher leadership is a necessary element of effective school restructuring as well as advancing the profession of educators. Subsequently, as instructional experts, TLs can assist colleagues in adopting proficient instructing approaches. Moreover, instructional leadership may entail guiding the integration of instruction, curriculum, or planning with fellow educators. To optimize student learning, educators ought to assume leadership functions and responsibility for school-wide transformation (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). While various authors (Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite, & Wilcox, 2015; Leavy, B., 2016) assert that educators can provide meaningful leadership in schools, unanimity is often lacking in terms of the best definition of teacher leadership.

Lai and Cheung (2015) attribute teacher leadership as a collaborative effort where teachers cultivate skills that enhance career growth to improve teaching to all learners. When serving in the capacity of a mentor teacher, for instance, TLs in this position act as role models that help familiarize new educators not just to the new environment but also the curriculum and

school practices. While mentoring is quite engaging, the momentous influence it has on the growth of new teachers is felt across the board.

Hallam et al. (2015) demonstrate that teacher leadership can derive enormous benefits from a shared structure, such as the capability to influence their contemporaries to alter their perception in terms of undertaking responsibilities without being compelled by some figurehead, such as a district administrator or politician. Unlike educational leadership, which is centered more on school policy and administration, TL focuses on a wide range of stakeholders such as teachers, parents, learners, policymakers, and the public. Teacher leadership is more directional and focused on improving the quality of collegial support among teachers. This translates into improved instruction and efficient learning of adult-learners and students along with improved communication with stakeholders within the community (Hallam et al., 2015).

What is Teacher Leadership?

Teacher leadership is a cluster of expertise showcased by educators that not only instruct learners but rather have a huge impact that stretches outside classrooms to other departments within the institution and elsewhere (Cheung, Reinhardt, Stone, & Little, 2018). For example, as resource providers, TLs can assist their fellow educators by sharing teaching materials including Websites, teaching manuals, documentaries, and other resources for purposes of advancing effective learning. Teacher leadership requires mobilizing and stimulating others with the aim of enhancing performance in tandem with instructing and learning. Rallying and invigorating other teachers behind a new plan do not just happen because a boss says so, it transpires authentically because the leader is knowledgeable and convincing (Hallam et al., 2015).

In this respect, an imperative attribute of a teacher leader is the expertise and dexterity needed to engage colleagues in multifarious tasks. TLs are also driven by the unrelenting force

for the central mission of the institution or its improvement plan. When a science educator, for instance, shares his or her disappointment with learners' unacceptable written reports, it would be prudent to invite English teachers to suggest approaches for writing guidelines (Cheung et al., 2018). An English instructor serving as an expert in this area enables the science educator to learn from the other colleague and determine the strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, shared strategies would impact student writing positively.

Since the enhancement of school performance entails approaching issues differently, teacher leadership is therefore tasked with managing some change processes (Cooper et al., 2016). Since curriculum specialists, more commonly known as coaches, have a better grasp of content specifications, they too have the prerogative to lead educators on embracing the standards with respect to how different elements of the curriculum integrate and the most appropriate way to use the curriculum to plan for teaching and assessment. Moreover, they also have a duty to ensure the curriculum is implemented across the school towards the realization of effective learning. Fundamentally, this has almost certainly not been the case. In most instances, improvement transpires when educators encourage fellow colleagues to become accomplished, thoughtful, and undertake their responsibilities with zeal and expertise. By conducting research on research-based classroom approaches, TLs may determine which instructional models are appropriate for teaching hence; share the outcomes with other teachers (Cooper et al., 2016). This research examined the impact of preparatory teacher leadership programs on its graduates and the work TLs do in pre-K-12th grade school systems.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Review of Relevant Terms

Teacher leadership programs. Teacher leadership programs refer to a traditional collegiate graduate program a teacher goes through to prepare for a teacher leadership role and the state certification process.

Teacher leader(s). (TL[s]) Teacher leader refers to a pre-K through the 12th-grade teacher who currently works at a school usually having his or her own classroom, but who also carries a skill set to empower other teachers in a collegial manner through multiple formal and informal ways (Cosenza, 2105). TLs can act in many different roles within their schools. Harrison and Killion (2007) give such examples as a mentor, learning facilitator, instructional or curriculum specialist, a catalyst for change, classroom supporter, or a resource provider.

Adult learner. Adult learner refers to an adult who is continuing his or her education willingly after traditional schooling to learn new concepts, techniques, and skills.

Students. Students will be used when referring to the pre-K-12th graders.

Learner. The learner is used within this paper to represent any person, at any age, who is in the process of obtaining and using new information.

Professional development (PD). PD is continuing education for adult learners. In this paper, the teacher leader facilitates learning among his or her staff where the focus usually pertains to the local school's or district wide's improvement plan.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Context

The level of employee professional development (PD) can make a major difference between low and high performing professionals, and members of the teaching profession are no exception. The importance of professional development among teachers has been emphasized in various studies. Hartshorne et al. (2013) acknowledge that teachers require professional development training to boost their performance. Leavy (2016) concurs with Hartshorne et al. (2013) by underlining that worker development improves performance, motivation, satisfaction, as well as a commitment to their jobs.

Leadership skills have been linked with improved employee effectiveness in most professions, however, it is circumstantial. Leavy's (2016) study shows that employees with leadership training in their careers tend to perform better than those without such skills. Conversely, in the corporate realm, Pyc, Meltzer, and Liu's (2017) study states the impact of assessment and the influence of leadership training on worker effectiveness among human resource managers in a pharmaceutical firm found that there is an insignificant performance difference among managers with leadership training and those without such training. Pyc, Meltzer, and Liu (2017) attribute such lack of performance difference to individual training in areas not related to their current profession hence making the transfer of learned skills difficult.

The teaching profession is also subjected to this controversy. Kyndt et al. (2016) found that there is no clear criterion for identifying and analyzing the leadership skills that teachers possess before offering them positions within any faculty. As a result, most holders of senior public-school leadership positions are not necessarily adequately prepared for the tasks that they ought to execute (Petty et al., 2016). There is an increasing urge to implement effective leadership in higher education public schools (Kyndt et al., 2016). However, little has been done

in terms of suggestions to enhance developmental programs. This study seeks to establish the effectiveness of teacher leadership programs on preparing TLs, along with its graduates' impact on school effectiveness, and to suggest strategies for aligning initiatives to teacher leadership development needs.

Statement of the Problem

There is a strong push for teacher leadership development programs within public schools (Martin et al., 2016). However, the impact of this initiative on the TLs and its effectiveness in schools remains uncertain. Most of the studies on this topic focus on professional development and its influence on employee effectiveness, productivity, and corporate performance (Lee & Steers, 2017; Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016; Masa'deh, Obeidat, & Tarhini, 2016). Other studies have dwelt on the effects of an effective leader on sheer performance alone. In other words, there are few studies that have explored the influence that preparatory TL programs have on TLs, or how a teacher leader feels he or she is impacting their school. As a result, some school administrations have been reluctant to approve of such programs. Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence that leadership training enhances teacher performance as well as school effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of TL graduate programs as told through the experiences of current TLs and to bridge the knowledge gap by understanding how TLs felt they were affecting their local schools.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Research Purpose and Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to explore teacher leadership programs and learn how they are being utilized in schools. Specifically, the study sought to address the following objectives:

- To examine how TLs are utilizing their graduate program within their careers.

- To assess the need for their time and how administrators utilize their professional expertise.

Research Questions

1) What impact do teacher leadership programs have on TLs?

2) In what capacity are TLs utilizing their graduate program within their careers?

3) What impact do TLs feel they are having at their schools?

Purpose Statement

Research has shown that the use of teacher leadership programs enhances teacher effectiveness (Powers et al., 2016). Moreover, given the rising competition in higher learning, no school would wish to be left behind in the implementation of such initiatives. Indeed, there is notable growth in interest among education policymakers on teacher leadership programs (Powers et al., 2016). However, it is uncertain whether such initiatives have a positive impact on graduate TLs and school effectiveness. Moreover, although some institutions of higher learning have established a leadership initiative, most of the programs do not incorporate leadership development relevant to school settings (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Therefore, the report offers invaluable information that will guide pre-K-12th grade schools and collegiate school administrators, managers, and education policymakers who might be interested in introducing such programs for the first time in their schools.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Various studies have been compiled assessing ways in which teacher leadership training affects TLs and the effectiveness of schools. Goodwin, Low, and Ng (2015) explored the need for teacher leadership programs and their essence in a school in Singapore. The study uncovered that the significance of teacher leadership has grown significantly over the last five years. According to Goodwin, Low, and Ng (2015), the growth is attributed to acknowledging the need to build teacher competence, capacity, leadership, and motivation to work in current dynamic school cultures. On the other hand, Bolman and Deal (2018) indicate that while some of the best educators are leaving the profession, most institutions are also running short of qualified principals to lead institutions, an aspect that widens the gap even further when it comes to overall student achievement.

In a similar study to assess the impact of teacher leadership programs in schools, Stein (2016) underlined that instructional leadership is essential for enabling TLs to work collaboratively, which is an important success factor for schools. In contrast, Stosich (2016) demonstrates that irrespective of the school setting or student demographics, teachers with strong instructional skills offer outstanding student success. Stein's (2016) study underscores that teacher leadership initiatives should not solely focus on leadership but also on instructional strategies and relying on the expertise of other teachers and senior specialists. All of these roles are essential for the effectiveness of schools. Stein (2016) concurs with Goodwin, Low, and Ng (2015) by acknowledging that teacher leadership training is essential for professional development where a teacher graduate can progressively advance to become an embedded teacher leader, instructional coach, an advocate for TLs, or a department head or content lead.

Impact of Teacher Leadership Programs on TLs and School Effectiveness

Collay (2016) establishes that regardless of the emphasis on specialized skills, the idea of teacher leadership as transitional leaders is employed on a number of objectives. In this respect, fundamental skills can be identified by examining activities that TLs are expected to undertake on a daily basis. Vanblaere and Devos (2016) explored the significance of teacher leadership through two lenses, instructional and transformational. The study involved 48 primary Belgium schools, having 495 primary school teacher participants obtained from a purposeful sampling technique. Data analysis revealed that the role of a teacher leader can be unsupported, undefined, undervalued, and sometimes unrecognized thereby limiting the potential positive impact of the programs (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). This study also concluded, however, that school leaders must be deeply involved in the classrooms, and transitional leaders must support and encourage fellow teachers. Finally, they conclude that it is strongly suggested that the merge of these two approaches complement each other in a teacher-leader role, and encourage the idea of programs or professional development offered based on this model.

Moreover, Kaparou and Bush (2015) suggest that by concentrating on skills educators need to lead their colleagues, teacher leadership advances the instructional capability in schools, thereby reinforcing the staff as well as the adult-learner culture. This results in an increase of the collaborative capacity of teams across a school. These results culminate in higher echelons of learner achievement. Consequently, performing teachers have the basis to stay at work and develop a bench of emerging leaders.

Vanblaere and Devos (2016) believe that teacher leadership programs play leading roles not only in enhancing teacher performance inside the classroom and school effectiveness but also for the success of roles taken by teachers as team leaders, department chairs, committee

members, curriculum writer, and associate leaders. They concluded that successful teacher leadership programs enable teachers to grow professionally and equip the teachers with leadership traits required for them to work collaboratively and adaptable to different school cultures (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

Utilizing the Teacher Leadership Program Within Their Careers

How graduates of TL programs utilize the TL degree within their careers is one of the broadly researched topics in the area of teacher leadership programs. In a mixed research design, Hall and Zierler (2015) assessed leadership roles that teacher leadership programs enable teachers to assume upon graduation. Hall and Zierler (2015) uncovered that teacher leadership initiatives are potentially powerful strategies for promoting collaborative, effective teaching practices in schools hence leading to increased learner attainment, improved decision-making at schools, and developing a dynamic teaching profession in the 21st century.

An extensive study by Kyndt, Gijbels, Grosemans, and Donche (2016) indicates that a number of educators who quit the discipline complained about the lack of career development prospects, which preclude them from making contributions outside their classrooms. What becomes evident is that a teacher will embrace his or her position more especially if there are professional growth avenues, he or she is an enthusiastic learner, and if she or he has learned how to maneuver through the micro-political climate within the school.

Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) hold a similar view that teacher leadership initiatives enable teachers to develop in various capacities including collaborative capabilities, professionalism, performance standards, teamwork, decision-making, and administrative skills. Conversely, Sinha et al. (2017) assert that most of these capacities have not yet been realized in most schools thus raising doubt regarding the effectiveness of the programs. However, Sinha et

al. (2017) acknowledged that an increasing proportion of teachers are pursuing leadership programs. Again, Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh, Hashemi and Kouhsari (2018) indicate that while teacher leadership plays an essential role in advancing student success, it has often been leaning towards legitimizing the conventional culture of teaching and its norms of autonomy and reverence to seniority. This has also had a negative effect on teachers owing to the emotional burden experienced.

The Degree of Efficacy at Which Teacher Graduates are Utilizing Prep Programs Within Their Careers.

Darling-Hammond (2017) conducted a study that involved 25 TLs in 10 public high schools in the UK to establish how efficiently graduate TLs utilize skills gained from teacher leadership initiatives. Darling-Hammond (2017) established that instead of teachers utilizing leadership skills alongside their colleagues and principles, they are often sent out of schools for bureaucratic professional development sessions. Most teachers attested that they get little or no time to practice the skills gained in school. As a result, the programs have a minimal positive impact on individual teachers and schools. Darling-Hammond (2017) concluded that chances to utilize teacher's leadership programs to transform school teaching and learning are squandered thereby hurting students and teachers if the teachers do not get chances to utilize the knowledge and skills gained from the programs.

Lai and Cheung (2015) suggest that though most educators are selected for their special skills, few responsibilities come with categorical experiences or processes for selection. The absence of an elaborate process for selecting TLs would most likely make other teachers think such appointments were based on favoritism. This also hampered the central objective of what teacher leadership is all about, such as teachers feeling demoralized and so forth. There has also

been a case where new teachers avoid offering their candidature for leadership positions for fear of intimidation by the veterans.

In a similar study, Jacques et al. (2017) established that most graduate TLs are forced to seek management roles in the education sector to practice the knowledge gained from leadership initiatives. Jacques et al. (2017) noted that some school principals do not allow teacher leadership graduates to practice in schools as they perceive them as threats to their leadership positions. Jacques et al. (2017) underscored that schools should be professional learning communities where a teacher leader coaches and guides one another to enhance institutional excellence. According to Jacques et al. (2017), schools should allow teachers to practice their leadership skills and fill leadership gaps. Most importantly, Jacques et al. (2017) recommended that schools make leadership not only inclusive for teachers but also suitable for principals. The author further noted that shared leadership accelerates student learning and improves academic outcomes.

As evident, there is a lack of consensus among researchers regarding the impact of teacher leadership programs on teacher leader and school effectiveness. As such, there is a need for further research to bridge the research gap. In addition, whereas the concept of educator leadership shows the reality that the teaching community has the capacity to lead; it fails to recognize the fact that teachers can make contributions outside the class as well (Mincu, 2015). Furthermore, even though instructional experts are expected to make periodic classroom visits and inform fellow educators concerning their practice, this approach is not effective since classroom educators remain distant, with only occasional visits. Wenner and Campbell (2017) assert that the goal of teacher leadership is about improving teaching at schools. On the contrary,

most TLs have been involved in administrative and supervisory roles as opposed to utilizing their

skills to impact student outcomes.

Summary and Implications of Literature Review

It is interesting to note that major research has been focusing on teacher leadership.

Scholars in the past decades have continued to explore what teacher leadership is and the

elements that support or inhibit teacher leadership (Wenner, and Campbell, 2017; York-Barr &

Duke, 2004). Nevertheless, very few scholars have researched past the basic components.

Difficult questions continue to arise, and it is only through more research that solutions can be

identified. A broad spectrum of data sources and research methodologies will be needed to

answer questions such as:

1. Which is the best technique to enact teacher leadership in the pre-K-12th grade school
   system?
2. Can theories of teacher leadership be developed to address the significance of the distinct
   form of leadership?
3. How does professional learning characterize teacher leadership and the context in which it is
   enacted?
4. How can teacher leadership extenuate teacher turnover?
5. Can teacher leadership be promoted among underrepresented groups in the pre-K-12th grade
   school system?
6. In what magnitude does teacher leadership lead to improved teaching practices and
   improved student learning?
7. What impact does education policies have on the enactment of teacher leadership?

TLs play a significant role in improving the learning experiences for their colleagues in

the pre-K-12th grade school system. Uncertainty and ineffectiveness though will continue to be

experienced if scholars do not fix the existing gaps in knowledge regarding teacher leadership. As a result, the review has identified these knowledge gaps to inform future research.

Roles That Teacher Leaders Play in School and Communities

Swan et al. (2017) indicate that while teachers support classroom activities, TLs are instrumental when implementing new ideas through lesson presentations and providing feedback. According to Kurstedt and Pizzi (2018), discussions with colleagues elevate the self-efficacy of educators and the confidence about their own competences. Moreover, TLs are quite effective when it comes to solving instructional issues witnessed in practice. For instance, teachers can help other teachers to master educational concepts through graphic representations, technology, and other various resources. Nevertheless, for teachers to be the most effective in supporting their colleagues, they have to be engaged in their learning continuously.

Salahuddin, Greenwood, and Conner (2018) assert that TLs expedite professional learning prospects among colleagues. According to Chow (2016), when educators learn and share instructional material with one another, they tend to concentrate on what enhances student learning or the teachers' needs. In reality, a classroom teacher's specialized learning becomes more pertinent, centered on his or her classroom that is structured to close any student learning gaps. Salahuddin, Greenwood, and Conner (2018) contend that with such a learning model, the detachments that are common in schools could be joined, which could more optimally lead to an effective learning environment.

Killion and Harrison (2017) contend that TLs take on different functions, such as serving on a board for school expansion, grade-level overseer, supporting school projects and also school representatives at the community or district task force. In this respect, a teacher leader can help to communicate the vision of the school to other teachers and professionals from across the

regions in a bid to rally behind the cause for the betterment of the institution in entirety

(Collinson & Tourish, 2015). Collinson and Tourish (2015) highlight that TLs may bring

together teachers from different grades and organize for school activities to ensure teachers and

learners are fully engaged.

Swan et al. (2017) indicate that while educators have access to an enormous amount of

information, data has often been underutilized in teaching students. Due to Khalifa, Gooden, and

Davis (2016), teacher leadership can prompt conversations where fellow teachers are involved in

appraising and optimizing data to reinforce instruction. For instance, a TL can lead a team of

teachers in examining the writing performance of students based on an assessment tool designed

by one teacher. The cross-examination helps educators to deliberate on the best way to teach

students.

Educator leaders can also act as change agents. Educators that assume a change catalyst

function are not just confident in what they do but are also dedicated to improving at everything.

According to Woulfin (2015), teachers who bring about change, help to review student learning.

Nonetheless, Ankrum (2016) affirms that when educators begin to point fingers at learners, a TL

emboldens them to alter how to change instructional practices in a bid to improve student

engagement and accomplishments.

Teachers play a critical role as resource specialists. In this capacity, teacher-leaders help

other teachers to solve problems or how to look for certain information. Moreover, teachers do

not just provide information to the staff but also instruct them on how to utilize the information

within their own classrooms. According to Rajbhandari and Rajbhandari (2015), while teachers

are the ones that require assistance to get acquainted with new skills, it is the responsibility of the

classroom teacher to fill the gap of the support person, especially when help is needed by the

student. Allen (2016) shows that support can be presented in different forms such as coaching, leading in a classroom and professional development (PD), and mentoring. Moreover, teachers often support their colleagues, hence doing peer-observations, leading a specific subject matter, or assisting during PD. Bryant and Rao (2019) emphasize that mentorship is another critical role that teachers undertake. While students emulate their educators, they are highly likely to alter behavioral patterns to match the teachers. This could imply teachers who deviate from work ethics can breed a bad crop of students. Equating this to teacher-leadership, the school's culture would then be affected negatively or positively based on the teacher-leader.

A veteran educator can also mentor a novice teacher as they embark on their profession. Lopez, (2016) affirms that a TL assumes additional responsibilities like leading the PTA meetings and while helping to organize mega-events in the school or local community. Educators that are proactive in school handle many tasks beyond teaching (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015). In this respect, the objectives that inform the actions of any teacher should correspond with the direction the school intends to take. In addition, without the involvement of a teacher, learning can be a futile process. Brezicha, Bergmark, and Mitra (2015) show that learning is an unending process, and since students will always learn something new each day, teachers create a learning culture that motivates students to explore issues at a great depth. While Hutchings et al. (2013) contend that when the classroom is operated without a schedule and goals to be accomplished, it not only makes learning an unproductive process but also rather makes it difficult for teachers to work effectively. Essentially, Chow (2016) highlights that TLs have what it takes to catalyze change where a classroom setting becomes a center of excellence. Cheng and Szeto (2016) assert that when the teacher assumes the facilitator role, they not only feel secure but also have a strong commitment to persistent improvement.

Biggers, Miller, Zangori, and Whitworth (2019) demonstrate that since teacher leadership intends to impact learning outcomes positively, it is the prerogative of teachers to ensure learning takes place in an enabling environment. Lopez (2016) posits that a student that cannot understand what is required of them can easily get off track. On the other hand, TLs are often embroiled in managing behavioral issues. This tends to divide teachers up, an aspect that has a huge bearing on the efficacy of learning owing to the lost time. Moreover, the inability of teachers to instill profound classroom practices is the genesis of unproductivity and incorrigible students. According to Beverborg, Sleegers and van Veen (2015), TLs can facilitate school improvement by collaborating with other colleagues to ensure activities are scheduled promptly, are fit for students and are in line with the school objectives.

The Need for Teacher Leadership Degrees in Education

Previous literature shows that teacher-leadership programs are different from conventional educational programs in terms of instruction, policy, with less focus on supervision and classroom management (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). However, Darling-Hammond (2017) alleges that teacher leadership degrees are needed to enhance the staff's knowledge base while ensuring equal opportunities for teachers to learn. In addition, teacher leadership degrees differ across collegiate institutions. However, institutions mostly put an emphasis on inquiry-based mentoring, coaching and instruction, professional growth, technology, and curriculum development. Several programs require that degree candidates complete a research project along with an internship that entails collaboration with school colleagues and leaders. Such offers are important when it comes to meeting the needs of pre-K-12th grade students by providing teachers with opportunities to expand their responsibilities and put a significant influence on learning institutions (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2017)

contends that Finland promotes equitable and quality education that requires teachers with at least a two-year master's degree, which prepares them for pedagogy and teaching. From the Finnish perspective, teaching is a long-term career where individuals can develop leadership skills with time. Nevertheless, Jacques et al. (2017) found that graduate degree programs do not have any impact on teachers' efficacy. Interestingly, according to Wenner and Campbell (2017), the TL degree enables teachers to take leading roles while enriching their understanding of teaching and learning. The TL degree offers strategies to improve leadership skills to handle the increasing improvement needs in schools. Nonetheless, a study by Hamzah, Noor, and Yusof (2016) demonstrates that teacher leadership is not only about assisting the learning of other teachers, rather it is also concerned with the internal and external issues of the school.

While there are several transformations such as standardized tests and staff evaluations, Wenner and Campbell (2017) argue that schools need TLs with a degree who can assist in the adoption and integration of such big state or district mandated changes. The TL degree is required to help teachers acquire collaborative, presentation, and research skills. Moreover, these programs train teachers on how to teach adult learners, which in turn contributes to benefiting a school's performance. This, however, can only be attained if the perspective of teacher leadership programs aligns with current changes and enhance the leader's general performance (Hamzah, Noor, & Yusof, 2016). Lastly, Wenner and Campbell (2017) posit a degree in teacher leadership boosts a teacher's self-confidence, improves his or her teaching, and encourages much more collaboration with colleagues and administration.

Use of Teacher Leadership in Schools

Research shows that TLs are facilitators in schools by spreading and reinforcing school improvement and teacher cooperation (Chow, 2016). Educational improvements at a school

level, for instance, require teacher leadership to manage professional development and help

within classrooms. This view is echoed by Cooper et al. (2016), who suggests that at an

instructional level, TLs oversee curriculum selection, monitor improvement attempts such at

Response to Intervention (RTI), data analysis, data inventories, and they may be asked to take

part in administrative meetings. While TLs are important in schools, lack of time to learn,

collaborate and engage hinder their growth (Lai & Cheung 2015). Conversely, the school can

promote the engagement of TLs through reflection, participation, and dialogue. In turn,

engagement energizes TLs to work with peers and enhance expertise. For instance, teachers

create a curriculum, discuss instructional activities, and evaluate learners' success (Lumpkin,

2016). This process is facilitated by TLs by creating a quality environment for all educators.

TLs may be used as agents to investigate useful and effective learning strategies while

developing the skills and confidence of other teachers.

Furthermore, in schools, TLs take part in peer coaching, research, engaging the

community and parents (Biggers, Miller, Zangori, & Whitworth 2019). These TLs are

experienced and competent educators. In addition, these are teachers who are also willingly self-

driven to continue learning in a structured traditional university environment, while working full-

time, possibly managing a family and more, all the while risking to take on even more

responsibilities within the profession.

Nevertheless, Hall and Zierler (2015), and York-Barr and Duke (2004) assert that certain

requirements are needed to promote the development of TLs in schools. They include a school

culture that facilitates leadership through school-wide reflective practice, collaboration, and

inquiry. Even though a teacher leader's requirement is mainly toward responsibilities and

relationships, such relationships cannot be fostered if there is not a clear definition between

administrator leader and TLs in addition to some shared roles (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).

School structure can also promote the development of TLs through the provision of professional

development programs. Vanblaere and Devos (2016) show that TLs act as agents of change in

schools through the improvement of educational practice, which can be attained through

collaboration. For that reason, TLs develop cooperative and trusting relationships with their

colleagues through learning (Kaparou & Bush, 2015). Additionally, TLs require a school culture

that is dedicated to supporting the learning of the staff and supporting the TL (York-Barr &

Duke, 2004). According to Goodwin, Low, and Ng (2015), school administrators require

personal, financial and legal skills to deal with challenges in administration. On the other hand,

administrators require the instructional ability to enhance both the teachers' and students'

outcomes. York-Barr and Duke (2004) emphasize the necessity for TLs to have the time,

resources, and support from their colleagues to carry out their work.

The current education system may require teacher leadership to assist school

administrators in managing different roles within the school (Darling-Hammond, 2017). For

instance, TLs help school administrators in delegating roles. Specifically, the TLs help

administrators to guide all the teachers and provide feedback to improve their skills (Hall &

Zierler, 2015). Additionally, TLs play an important role in enhancing relationships to increase

learners' achievement. The outcome of effective leaders enhances students' performance as well

as pride among the teaching staff (Sinha et al., 2017). Encouraging and confident leadership

highlights relationships and respect across the school.

The Four Waves of Teacher Leadership

Stakeholders in the curriculum development circles have been trying to understand the

role of teacher and leadership capacity in the pre-K-12th grade school system. Changes have

been proposed, and they continue to shape the development of TLs significantly. Improving the

education system in America requires teacher leadership to be clearly understood by scholars and

practitioners. The waves of teacher leadership helped me gain more insight into the practice of

teacher leadership in the pre-K-12th grade school system. A summary is provided for each wave

and how they are unique to each organization, state, and district. In 2000, Silva, Gimbert, and

Nolan introduced three waves of a TL initiative within a school. These were primarily more

defined teacher roles, rather than school-wide views. The first wave being that a TL had more

formal roles, seen as managers of school operations. The second wave, was a TL's instructional

expertise, using these TL as curriculum leaders, staff developers, and mentors of new teachers.

The last process was called the process of "reculturing" schools. This reculturing is done

through professional learning communities, assisting in the school improvement plans, and

encouraging more stakeholder's involvement within the schools. Almost a decade later, Sanocki

(2013) transforms the three waves into four waves.

The First Wave of Teacher Leadership

In the first wave, it is centered on the hierarchical roles of teachers and the education

system itself. Sanocki (2013) came up with the assertion that teacher leadership subsists when

the teachers are given responsibilities outside their school rooms. A teacher cannot acquire

leadership skills if they are not given opportunities to make decisions for their schools. The

opportunities can include being department heads, lead teacher, or representatives of their

teacher unions. Cosenza (2015) outlines that teachers need to be given lifelong learning

opportunities that will enable them to develop leadership skills. For instance, graduate teachers

can be given some responsibilities in the school and thus enable them to implement the lessons

of leadership they have learned from the curriculum. Such initiatives help to demystify myths

that have made teachers believe leadership is only based at the top tier levels in an organization. Cosenza indicates that teachers will be in positions to demonstrate leadership in the scope of their jobs even though they do not hold leadership positions in their schools. According to Sanocki (2013), it is not a necessity that teachers are given formal leadership roles for them to bring change within their schools. Although it may be the best practice for teachers to be given increased roles and a voice to address decision-making, curriculum input, and suggestions to improve their school environments.

The Second Wave of Teacher Leadership

In the second wave, the vehemence of teacher leadership recognizes their roles as instructional leaders. The concept of teacher leadership is as a result of school cultures and hierarchical leadership in schools. Sanocki (2013) holds the opinion that the success of leadership by a teacher is influenced at a personal capacity and limited by leadership structures in schools. The teachers, therefore, may be seen as managers as compared to change agents from the formal or informal positions they hold in school or society. According to Goddard, Goddard, Sook Kim, & Miller (2015), the instructional leadership from school administrators will determine the level at which teachers should work together, collaborate and contribute to the effectiveness of their schools. The actions of the teacher outside classrooms can have an impact on their colleagues. The shift to the second wave, therefore, comes up when there is a change in perception among practitioners. Sanocki (2013) suggests that there is a need for more professional development to ensure teachers are adequately prepared and will carry out their roles as leaders. Though they need to balance their roles as instructional leaders and teachers to safeguard against overextending themselves.

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The Third Wave of Teacher Leadership

In the third wave, the idea of transformational leadership in TLs is introduced. A teacher can assist other teachers to lead and improve their professional practice, which is a shift from thinking to practice (Sanocki, 2013). The suggested initiatives include engaging in professional activities, mentoring their peers, and redesigning their school curriculums. The teachers are empowered to make decisions without the need to have formal roles at their schools through such initiatives. Allen, Grigsby, & Peters (2015) assert that school administrators who demonstrate transformational characteristics play a significant function in promoting excellent conditions that will improve teachers' engagement and the learning environment. Positive school climates are associated with higher levels of students' academic performance. Transformational leadership welcomes the teachers to bring change in and outside their school environments. Sanocki (2013) outlines that there has been an emergence of characteristics of teacher leadership, which include advocates, change agents, and role models. In this wave, the current TLs play a significant role in modeling the other teachers to become better leaders in the pre-K-12th grade school system and beyond. Through their leadership, the teachers acquire essential characteristics which they use to improve the learning environment and student performance.

The Fourth Wave of Teacher Leadership

In the fourth wave, teacher leadership is now considered transformational. According to Sanocki (2013), in the fourth wave, a transformational leadership classroom is created, and the teachers work in collaboration with their students to create and maintain a shared culture. Learning and development of leadership skills arise as a result of such environments that are conducive for all the stakeholders. The TLs act as education facilitators and change agents whose role is to transform their school and communities. Fairman & Mackenzie (2015) hold the

opinion that teachers need to assume leadership functions and make decisions that lead to school-wide transformation; therefore, optimizing student learning. From the transformational shift the TLs have experienced; they provide meaningful leadership to their schools. There will most likely be a guarantee of future leaders to continue with the transformational process in the pre-K-12th grade school system and the overall American education. One of the most notable differences between teacher leadership and educational leadership, is that TLs want to stay in the classroom and continue to work with their colleagues, students, and communities. While those who go into educational leadership want to support educational policies, attend to and support the needs of stakeholders, transform schools with a more top-down approach, and move more frequently between schools.

From the analysis of the four waves, it is notable that teacher leadership has transformed and continues to expand. Public school pre-K-12th grade teachers not only play their roles in the classroom but also in the development of curriculum and the organization of schools through collaborating with their colleagues and other stakeholders in society.

The Importance of the Study to Current and Future TLs, Graduate Programs and State certifications

This study set out to help establish how teacher leadership will improve learning, inquiry, and reflective teaching practices. In Hall and Zierler's (2015) study, they uncovered that teacher leadership initiatives are effective in promoting collaborative, effective teaching practices that lead to increased learner attainment, and improved decision-making. Improving the pre-K-12th grade school system is critical to enhancing the American education system. The results of this research will help in the development of better policies, and with the support and buy-in of the school, there will be an improvement especially with input and decision making from all the

educational stakeholders at various levels. This study will help in establishing what is needed to

offer the most relevant teacher leadership programs. There has been an increasing urge to

implement effective leadership programs in public schools (Kyndt et al., 2016). However, the

challenge is identifying the best developmental programs that will suit each educational

institution. Identification of the most beneficial aspects within TL graduate programs will help

in developing TLs and improve the effectiveness of schools (Swan Dagen, Morewood & Smith,

2017). Such initiatives will give solutions to current and future challenges TLs are likely to

experience in the education system.

This TL study also helped to identify current and future trends in teacher leadership.

Schools continue to operate in complex environments and face myriad challenges (York-Barr &

Duke, 2004). Notable interest from education policymakers has led to the implementation of

new initiatives that are leading to a change in trends (Powers et al., 2016). Researching about

teacher leadership is critical in identifying the trend and establishing how the initiatives are

aligned to school cultures and current trends. This study also gives recommendations for state

agencies to change the curriculum of higher-ed TL programs by implementing effective

programs are aligned to the TL's district improvement goals and the needs of their local school

and community members.

Studying teacher leadership literature has also helped in establishing how to define,

improve, and enhance the roles of TLs and promote positive working relationships with school

administrators. Rincón-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) hold the opinion that teacher leadership

initiatives enable teachers to acquire collaborative, administrative skills, professionalism, and

performance standards. Contrariwise, Von Dohlen and Karvonen (2018) found TLs are good

support for school morals but are lacking in professional development opportunities and other

organization initiatives. Better education outcomes cannot be achieved without improving the

expertise of TLs. The results of the research help to inform the formulation of such programs

and ensure the policies created will lead to the development of a conducive working environment

to benefit all stakeholders. From York-Barr and Duke's (2004) extensive research on teacher

leadership, the term itself is an umbrella term with an ambiguous definition. Teacher leadership

is often comprised of a wide variety of roles such as working with students, colleagues,

administration, and working on curriculum and instruction, PD, and the organization.

Arguably, the most valuable aspect to teacher leadership is having an in-house teacher

who is willing to take on additional roles and training so that he or she may support colleagues,

administration, the community, or other stakeholders in ways that ultimately enhance pre-K-12th

grade students' academic development and foster a collegial environment. Educational

institutions continue to operate in complex environments. How schools respond to the complex

challenges depend on the efforts made by district stakeholders, administrators, and TLs to ensure

they can survive in the unpredictable environment (Kraft, Papay, Johnson, Charner-Laird, &

Reinhorn, 2015). Such efforts are leading to an improvement in academic performances from

the students and the development of future leaders. For example, teachers are responsible for

creating a curriculum, discussing instructional strategies, and evaluating student successes

through data-driven instruction, differentiation, and growth (Lumpkin, 2016). TLs facilitate such

processes; therefore, they end up creating a conducive environment for all education

stakeholders, and better results are achieved.

Presumably, the least valued aspect to TL graduate programs is the way it is influenced

both politically and financially. According to Young & Lewis (2015), policy implementation is

the core of political undertaking, and that ends up influencing principals' experiences. Politicians

in the state have their agendas, and their vision is not always aligned to that of TLs in the pre-K-12th grade school system. When educational policies and issues become entangled to politics, the leadership programs end up being affected. The TLs end up having a difficult time implementing their programs and guaranteeing academic success from the teachers or the students. For instance, meaningful discussions cannot take place at the school boards, because logical arguments by the TLs would not be approved.

Theoretical Framework

A constructivist theoretical lens holds to an interpretivist view, as truth and meaning are not external, but are constructed by and interpreted through a person's own understanding of the world they live in (Gray, 2013). Thus, this was a qualitative interpretive study, based on the inductive nature of experiences through the perspective of teacher-leaders in pre-K-12th grade schools. This comprehensive answer includes a rationale for the preferred epistemological stance in regard to the research paradigm, research approach, and research strategy.

The urge for this study emanated from the constructivist theoretical framework. Previous literature shows that behavioral learning approaches are essential in recognizing and influencing the activities of the learners (Thanh, 2016). However, TLs are interested in understanding learners' thoughts and want to improve them. In this form of teaching, assistance comes from constructivism. The theory of constructivism originates from Bruner's depiction of the discovery of learning and Piaget's constructivist interpretations (Marti, 2017). On the other hand, a study by Amineh and Asl (2015) demonstrates that the constructivist theory is the integration of cognitive and behaviorist viewpoints. In addition, based on a constructivist standpoint, learning is a process that puts emphasis on developing meaning and how individuals make sense from experiences (see Figure 1). The main purpose of constructivism is that it presents all learners

with a platform to actively build knowledge and meaning from their experiences by identifying

things in their surroundings (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Moreover, learning is an adaptive procedure

that incorporates existing and new knowledge to generate innovative ideas through exploration

and discovery.

Constructivist theory asserts that all learners are independent persons who utilize experts

to assist in their individual learning (Fernando & Marikar, 2017). For example, after teacher

leadership programs, graduates bring back relevant coursework to their school, mentoring, tech

training, and coaching practices, along with PD designs. The constructivist theory encourages

learners to develop their own meanings. Learners are not passive participants; hence, they may

find it hard to process and transfer the information they receive. For that reason, constructivism

allows learners to make sense of the information through discovery, manipulation, and

development. Furthermore, in attempting to make sense of the information, learners must link

the new and existing knowledge. Nonetheless, this requires that a learner question, compare,

explore and challenge existing information and beliefs to scaffold his or her learning on previous

knowledge. Again, the constructivist theory emphasizes gaining knowledge that occurs within a

learner's social environment where they compare and share views. Even though social

interaction is achieved in a small group activity, entire group discussions present learners with

another platform to articulate knowledge and learn from peers (Thanh, 2016). Consequently, it

enables expressive learning via authentic tasks. TLs use these strategies and understandings of

social dynamics to more effectively communicate with a diverse staff knowingly with an

appreciation for other teachers' situations, experiences, expertise in various fields, and

contributions to their school and community.

Figure 1.

Constructivist model of building upon knowledge from various aspects in one's life, Stoddard

(2020).
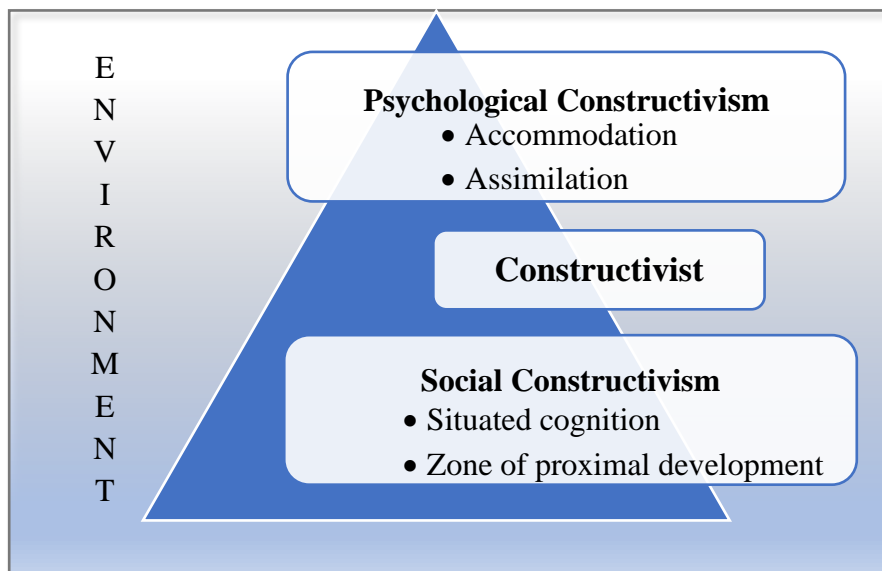
Individual/Psychological Constructivism

Psychological constructivism concentrates on a person's knowledge, identity and beliefs,

which indicate the internal consciousness of persons (Thanh, 2016). Psychological

constructivism shows the interplay between accommodation and assimilation. Assimilation

entails the integration of new knowledge based on the pre-existing constructs or ideas. In other

words, assimilation concentrates on combining new information within the existing one

(Kalpana, 2014). Conversely, accommodation is the amendment of existing concepts in

accordance with experiences (Thanh, 2016). Assimilation and accommodation function together

to achieve a cognitive balance between previous and new information. This cognitive balance

comprises of psychological representation of experiences. Thus, knowledge is obtained not from

rote memory, but through experiences associated with the concept (Kalpana 2014). The goal of

psychological constructivism is that individuals acquire new knowledge by mentally organizing and restructuring experiences as well as new information. In part, structuring happens by connecting new experiences with meaningful existing knowledge. Generally, psychological constructivism is based on the views of Piaget, that learning is a discovery process as depicted in Figure 1. TLs are a resource within a school who can continue the cycle of this discovery process: learning, sharing, undertaking, and reflection.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism originates from Vygotsky's views highlighting the importance of social perspectives of learning while knowledge is jointly developed (Zajda, 2018). Interaction among learners enables them to exchange ideas leading to mutual recognition. The main concepts in social constructivism include situated cognition and Zone of proximal development (ZPD). The situated cognition shows that thinking is based on physical and social milieus instead of the mind (Amineh & Asl, 2015). This implies that knowledge is acquired within the situation being learned, hence some new knowledge is based on context and may be more difficult to use in other situations. For that reason, the learning situation must be associated with actual situations. Zone of proximal development (ZPD), on the other hand, is a method that involves teaching skills through various activities that are complex for children to attain independently, similarly with adult-learners; but they master such activities if guided (Vygotsky, 1978). For instance, peer-mentoring is one of the strategies teacher-leaders use to guide other teachers. With the development of technology, continued learning has become essential as it facilitates the organization of most educational tasks. Thanh (2016) states that the main objective of the constructivist theory is to assist learning that promotes critical thinking while motivating independence among all learners.

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Role of the more knowledgeable other.

A teacher leadership position may be one of the best ways to transfer external knowledge internally within a school (Lewis, Perry, Hurd, & O'Connell, 2006). Teacher-leaders, who go through a traditional university graduate program, have gained specific skills which are geared toward instructing adult-learners and facilitating collaborative learning among a school staff. This gained knowledge makes the teacher-leader the more knowledgeable other (MKO), who also has internal access to redeliver information to school staff (Abtahi, Graven, & Lerman, 2017; Lewis et al., 2006). In teacher leadership programs, teachers must shift their thinking from teaching young students to teaching adult learners. A well-respected TL who works in a collegial manner, more effectively delivers content or facilitate change than an external facilitator (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Allen, 2016).

Based on various factors shown in Figure 2, external contributors such as coaches, speakers, and even staff from another school may face difficulties in transferring knowledge. TLs may be more successful in accessing the staff due to already being embedded within the school (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Kurstedt & Pizzi, 2018; Allen, et al., 2015; Sinha et al., 2017; Sanocki, 2013; Chow, 2016; Cooper et al., 2016; Biggers et al., 2019). The general transfer of knowledge depicted in Figure 3 specifically focuses on the TL. However, it is noteworthy that an individual who is the more knowledgeable one can change through informal dialogue depending on context (Abtahi, Graven, & Lerman, 2017).

Figure 2.

Transfer of knowledge to staff from an external and internal source, Stoddard (2020).
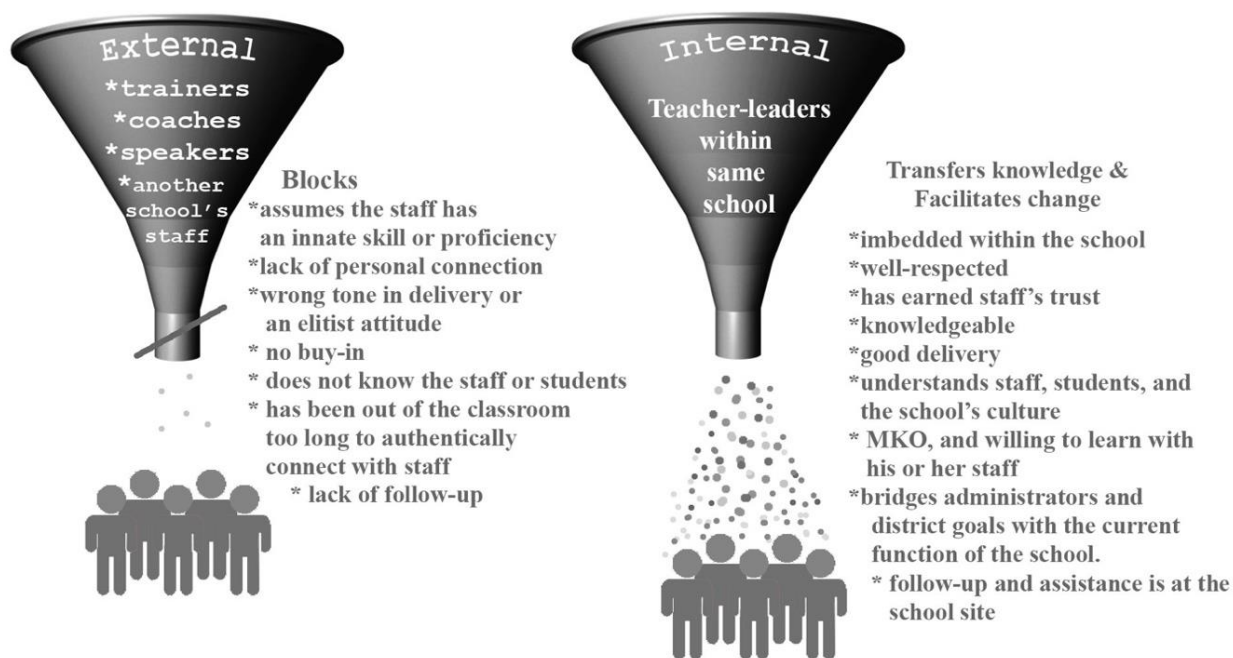
Founded on social constructivist, teaching techniques highlight reciprocal teaching, student

collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships and involved leaders in teams (Akpan & Beard, 2016).

Furthermore, teaching based on social constructivist emphasizes the importance of collaboration

between teachers (Figures 2 & 3). Marti (2017) argues that the association between teachers,

with the social institutions and political economy, is essential when it comes to practical

knowledge. As such, learning should take into consideration this knowledge.

Figure 3.

Multi-directional transfer of knowledge from the more knowledgeable other. Stoddard, 2020.

University
graduate
program

Trainings

Outside
resources

Teacher-leader

Teacher
Leader

**Classroom teachers,school
staff, stakeholders, and
community**

classroom
teachers, school
staff,
stakeholders, and
community

PD
teachers & staff,
students, parents,
other stakeholders,
and community

**students and other interested
parties**
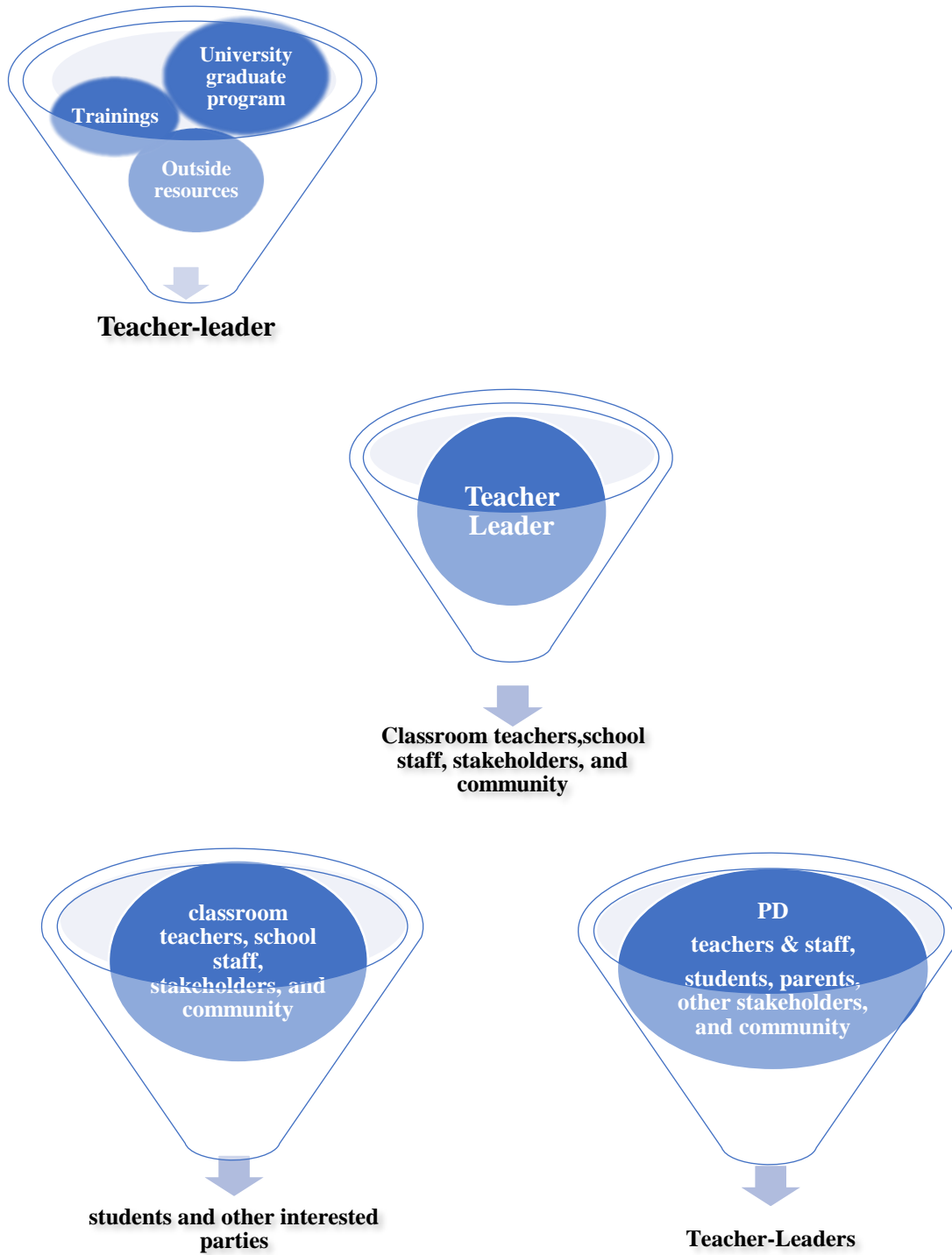
Teacher-Leaders

Importance of the Learner

Social constructivists view a learner based on his or her distinctiveness and complexity (Duit & Beard, 2016). However, social constructivist motivates and rewards learners as important components in the learning process. This theory promotes a learner's perspective of truth that is influenced by their experiences or culture. Social constructivist also focuses on the significance of the interaction between learners and knowledgeable people in their community and within society. To illustrate this further, a TL could assist in acquiring professional community members to volunteer at his or her school to teach students about their profession. This would give pre-K-12th grade students a broader perspective with more expertise to draw from.

Duit (2016) alleges that children develop thinking skills via interaction with not only adults but also peers and the physical world. As a result, the social constructivist learning process should take into consideration the learners' background as well as culture. The learners' background is the foundation that shapes their truth and knowledge acquired through learning. From a social constructivist standpoint, in the learning process teachers are facilitators (Zajda, 2018). A teacher presents instructional material to his or her students, whereas, a facilitator assists in the learner's exploration and understanding of the material. Thus, as the teacher-leader becomes the facilitator, the adult-learners become more engaged and are active participants in their new learning.

The change in teachers' roles demonstrates that they need to exhibit the skill set that facilitates learning. Teachers ask and lecture from the front whereas the facilitators supporting student learning from the back (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Additionally, teachers provide answers based on the curriculum. In contrast, facilitators guide and create a good learning environment

for the learners to make and draw conclusions. Nonetheless, the learning environment should be

supportive and at the same time challenge learners' thinking. Even though learners have to take

ownership of problem-solving, the teachers must recognize that not all activities are sufficient.

The important aspect is helping teachers become critical thinkers (Zajda, 2018). This can be

attained with different teaching roles such as leaders, coaches, facilitators, consultants, and peer

mentors. The learning environment, however formal or informal, is instrumental in how a

learner will obtain new knowledge. The administration, staff, and community collaboratively

determine a school's culture, subsequently, this learning environment may also determine the

teacher-leaders' effectiveness within the school.

Research Paradigm

A paradigm refers to a structure or a set of ideas and suppositions which offer a pathway

to understand a given phenomenon being explored. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), a

model is a set of beliefs that is helpful in conducting a study. Therefore, paradigms are vital in

any given study since they present beliefs and direction that influence what should be explored,

the way of studying it and how to interpret the results. This study used a qualitative research

paradigm to gain an understanding of how teacher leadership programs impact its graduates and

P-12 school systems. Owing to the fact that this is qualitative research, both an interpretivist or

positivist paradigm were fully examined (Klenke, 2016).

An interpretivist paradigm highlights on recognizing the subjective nature of human

experiences (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This paradigm focuses on understanding the views of

people and their interpretations of their surroundings. As such, the primary principle of the

interpretivist paradigm is to substantiate the fact that veracity is socially created (Kivunja &

Kuyini, 2017). Furthermore, interpretivist researchers ensure that theory is consistent with research such that it is aligned with data collected.

On the other hand, in research, the positivist paradigm is employed to establish the cause and effect association. It is also appropriate when interpreting observations based on measurable outcomes as well as facts (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Researches that use the positivist paradigm are deductive in nature, creation of hypothesis and drawing conclusion. The positivist paradigm focuses on presenting explanations and makes projections with respect to measurable outcomes, which are undergirded by determinism, parsimony, generalizability, and empiricism (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Positivism states that reality depends on human experience (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Similarly, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) affirm that the positivist paradigm is based on the scientific approach of exploration, which uses experimentation to understand observations and respond to the research questions. Many researchers depend on the scientific method to approach their studies; however, others work from an interpretivist framework. This experimentation, however, is not the goal of this teacher leadership study. Rather, an interpretivist viewpoint looks to comprehend social universes from the perspective of its members, prompting an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.

After extensive consideration, the study was based within the interpretivism paradigm which is comprehensive and suitable in illuminating the interests of the present research and help in listening to respondents' 'hidden' voices regarding the essence of leadership programs for graduate teachers. In addition, the interpretivist paradigm is preferred for the study because it would enable the researcher to comprehend and interpret the impact of teacher leadership programs on TLs and the school's achievement. Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm permits the researcher to understand the capacity at which graduates utilize and the degree of efficacy

leadership program within their careers. Essentially, the interpretivist paradigm provided the researcher with a platform for understanding the research topic.

Research Approach

The chosen strategy for this study is a qualitative survey approach. Lewis (2015) describes the approach as a subjective and systematic method used to explore and elucidate experiences of daily life and give them meaning. A qualitative approach is one of the ways an investigator can make claims in accordance with constructivist perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In other words, the investigator sets out to understand the meanings humans take from their experiences. In addition, qualitative research approaches employ different methods of inquiry including case studies, grounded theory, ethnographies, phenomenologists and narratives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative researchers capture not only open-ended but also developing information with the goals of understanding interpretations of human experiences and finding themes that may emerge from the data.

The Rationale for Theoretical Framework

The rationale for selecting constructivism theory as the theoretical framework for this study is guided by the fact that in schools today, there is diversity in terms of learners' strengths and culture. Therefore, the teacher's role is to assimilate the content based on individual learners' needs and strengths to accommodate and expedite learning. Furthermore, the constructivism theoretical model was selected because it is consistent with the objective of this study. Specifically, in a constructivist classroom, knowledge is developed through what an individual learner shares from previous experience or collaboration. Teacher-leaders can aid in this dialogue among staff members to share relevant experiences and their specialized knowledge.

Again, the constructivist classroom setting is student-based and curriculum lead, meaning the teacher can deliberately request learners to participate. Conversely, in the constructivist classroom or PD, the teacher-leader acts as a guide or a facilitator which stimulates learners to explore a wide range of ideas (Thanh, 2016). The learner is an active thinker and co-developer of knowledge. As such, the constructivist framework is preferred for this study because it presents a platform for teachers to construct a classroom-like setting that allows for their colleagues to be independent learners.

The constructivist framework is also preferred for this study because it presents learning based on real-life situations. According to Kalpana (2014), constructivism is proposed for teachers because it presents an opportunity for learning in real life with numerous solutions. For instance, when teaching science, a teacher should focus on discovery, providing positive feedback and guidance as learners create the clarifications of a phenomenon. Nevertheless, this can be achieved if there is a collaboration among learners. Hence, the constructivist theory allows teachers to encourage collaborative work among learners through the joint construction of knowledge using examples as well as analogies (Kalpana, 2014). Another rationale for choosing the constructivist framework is that it aligns with the idea of TLs supporting the learning of their adult peers by enhancing a school's culture and contributing to a more collegial atmosphere.

Evidence shows that cooperative learning can be attained through mixed-ability teaming of learners and rewarded based on the success (Casey, Goodyear, & Dyson, 2015). In addition, cooperative learning fosters social, cognitive and physical outcomes of learning. For instance, cooperative learning is associated with responsibility, interdependence and improved social skills.

TLs can foster collaboration and staff communication through providing problem-based learning PLCs. This learning strategy helps learners to collaborate and find a solution to a problem (Kalpana, 2014). In addition, problem-based learning informs learners to consider different views of a specific event, which enhances flexibility in reasoning and thinking skills. In turn, flexibility enables learners to compare and contrast different solutions and make a conclusion. Generally, constructivist learning is used to motivate learners to be independent and active to construct knowledge. Research shows that constructivist learning leads to improved learner skills, motivation, and achievement (Thanh, 2016). Besides, constructivism is beneficial in learning and teaching since it presents an instructional technique to the educator-based instructive strategies. For these reasons, the constructivist framework is suitable for this study since it could address teacher-centered techniques, predominant teaching, and learning that have failed to optimize the learners' ability to be creative, active, independent and reflective.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objective of this study was to explore teacher leadership graduate programs and how those new skills are being utilized in schools. Specifically, this study sought to address the following objectives:

- To examine how graduates are utilizing their graduate program within their careers.

- To assess the need for TL's time and how administrators utilize their professional expertise.

Research Questions

1) What impact do teacher leadership programs have on TLs?

2) In what capacity are TLs utilizing their graduate program within their careers?

3) What impact do TLs feel they are having at their schools?

Research Methodology

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative survey research approach was adopted to investigate different perspectives and life experiences related to teacher leadership programs and discovered their importance through a holistic approach. This study identified TLs and explored what similar patterns emerged from their stories. The significance of gathering data helped the research by understanding the respondents' behaviors in taking part in a TL graduate program and continuing as a TL, thus having the ability to report the findings narratively. Creswell and Creswell (2017) allege that in qualitative research the investigator concentrates on exploring the research topic by collecting participants' views through a narrative approach. In this case, 7 participants were given open-ended surveys to respond to the research questions, along with the option of a follow-up interview. The participants all participated in the survey, with one participant further wanting to discuss her experience. A questionnaire is a data collection tool

with a set of questions with the intention of collecting participants' views (Brace, 2018). A

survey, however, can use the questionnaire to further narrow a selected group of participants.

Having a strict criterion, using a questionnaire as a tool was not necessary for formulating the

survey for this study. This survey was comprised of 19 questions to answer the research

questions for this study (Appendix B).

The survey was suitable for this study because it is economical and efficient in gathering

detailed data on participants' experiences. Moreover, a survey can either be given through

telephone, email, post mail, face-to-face or through an online real-time video application. Since

this was qualitative research, the survey used open-ended questions. The electronic open-ended

survey allowed the participants to provide detailed responses. The surveys allowed for a deeper

view of the participants' teacher leadership programs and what they are currently doing in their

schools. It is time-consuming to collect and analyze data from open-ended questions (Brace,

2018). Nonetheless, the survey allowed me to gather comprehensive information to better

properly understand the impact of TL programs on TLs and their perspective on teacher

leadership roles in schools.

Brace (2018) cautions, there are some disadvantages to using a questionnaire or survey.

For example, if a participant does not find writing or typing a comfortable way of expressing

himself or herself, he or she may opt to do an interview instead. Another disadvantage may be if

a participant thought the survey would take too much time or require too much effort to answer.

This may result in brief and undetailed responses. In this circumstance, participants who wanted

to continue with the TL research may opt to contribute verbally through an interview. Brace

(2018) however does affirm a benefit to using self-completion surveys, when a participant wants

to disclose something that may embarrass or not give a positive impression of a participant's experience.

Brace (2018) discusses several biased responses a researcher should be mindful of when collecting and analyzing data from surveys, interviews, or questionnaires. Some participants may have an inaccurate memory, inattention to details, or could deliberately lie. Another bias to be aware of is the social desirability bias (SDB). The social desirability bias is when a respondent wants to make him or herself appear differently than he or she really is for impression management reasons. Brace (2018) suggests to be alert to inaccuracies such as these, especially noticeable when overstated by the respondents in a braggart way (good citizenship, well-informed, or cultured), or noticeably underreported in the responses (illness, illegal, or contra normative behavior). Brace (2018) states that ultimately the respondent wants to impress the interviewer, therefore self-completion surveys have shown to be more honest when it comes to admission of socially undesirable behaviors.

Value of Specific Methodology

The constructivist/interpretivist strategy was suitable for this study because it enabled me to rely on the surveys from TLs to understand their views about the impacts and the effectiveness of teacher leadership programs, while also allowing the opportunity to obtain even more in-depth information through semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Specifically, the subjective nature of the constructivist strategy helped me in understanding the experiences of TLs, ultimately leading to two dominant themes from the data. In particular, surveys with open-ended questions were used to collect the views of TLs' in their school settings.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Research Design

In research, the population size should be sufficient to make valid as well as reliable conclusions. The population sample is based on the analysis strategy, sample specificity and objective of the study (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016). Even though qualitative studies use small population samples, it must be adequate enough to provide comprehensive information about the topic being studied. Approval for the research was first approved by the International Review Board (IRB). This study included 7 TLs who graduated or were close to graduating (9 or fewer hours) a graduate-level TL program. Using purposeful sampling, these in-service TLs are currently working in public education pre-K-12th grade. In order to obtain the direct contact information for TLs, permission was asked of all the teacher leadership program coordinators at all the graduate institutions within this southeastern state that offered a higher degree in teacher leadership to send an email of interest to participate in the study. Once interested parties responded directly about participating, an introductory letter and consent form (see Appendix A) were sent initiate their participation. After the consent was signed and returned, the survey (Appendix B) was sent via email to the willing participants.

Purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011; Patton, 2002) is used to study information-rich cases who can contribute to an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and not a mere generalization. Under Patton's purposeful sampling" umbrella is criterion sampling. Criterion sampling involves reviewing and studying cases (participants) that meet a predetermined criterion. Criterion sampling was used to determine the participants for this study. An argument against using criterion sampling is if the researcher's parameters are too narrow, this would restrict the findings and jeopardize the transferability (Suri, 2011).

Setting

Due to the flexibility of the internet and phone, each participant was able to determine the setting that he or she would contribute to the data. Teacher Leadership graduate program coordinators sent out a letter of interest to their graduates or close to graduating (9 or less hours) students. Four of the six program coordinators sent out the letter of interest to their students. In total, there were eight confirmed participants. From here, the participants were able to have direct contact with the researcher. After receiving the initial contact directly from my population sample, an email was sent to each participating member an introductory letter with the consent form (see Appendix A). One platform offered to the participants to collect responds was through an online survey that contains open-ended questions. In addition, participants were offered the option to conduct and interview via phone or Skype. This alternative to an in-person interview would allow for a wider selection of participants within the state, and gives another option to those who feel more comfortable telling rather than writing about their experiences. All the surveys and the phone interview data were collected through the graduate institution's email sever, and then stored in a password protected, privately owned computer. The interview was recorded and immediately transcribed afterward. Immediately pseudonyms were created for the participants and from there, referred to as Participant 1-7. The eighth respondent had a family emergency and could not participate.

Overall Populations

The criterion for the participants was based on whether they were post-graduate or near graduate (9 hours or under) in-service TLs currently working in the state pre-K-12th grade education system (see Table 1). These participants were chosen based on purposeful criterion sampling. After finishing the survey, the participants were asked if they would be interested in

taking part in the interviews. One participant agreed to be interviewed further. That interview

was recorded and immediately transcribed. The other participants did not feel that there was

more to discuss further from what the survey asked. The sampling procedure is broken down in

further detail (see Table 1) by the participants' degrees, years of service, gender, state

certification, and current highest degree.

Table 1.

Participant criterion categories.

Participant #	Graduate or in TL Program	Years of Experience	Level of Education	Grade or Content Taught	Gender	State Certification
1	Graduate	12	Masters in Teacher Leadership	5th Math	Female	Preparing to take at the time of the study
2	Currently enrolled	10	Specialist Pursuing Ed. D in Teacher Leadership	HS Sp. Ed. Co-Teacher Mid-year change from MS Sp.Ed.	Female	Preparing to take at the time of the study /undecided
3	Currently enrolled	9	Masters in Teacher Leadership	7th ELA	Female	Preparing to take at the time of the study
4	Graduate	22	Masters in Teacher Leadership	9-12 Spanish & Teacher on Assignment	Female	Passed
5	Graduate	9	Specialist in Teacher Leadership	7th Math and ELA	Female	Preparing to take at the time of the study
6	Currently enrolled	15	Specialist Pursuing Ed.D in Teacher Leadership	Middle Grades ELA	Female	Preparing to take at the time of the study
7	Graduate	7	Specialist Pursuing Ed. D in Teacher Leadership	Middle Grades Science Intervention	Male	Passed

Six of the seven participants are female, one is male (see Table 2). Two of the seven

participants passed the state certification. Three of the seven participants are pursuing their

doctorate degrees. Three of the seven participants have received their Masters in TL. One of the

seven participants received their Specialist degree in TL. Four of the seven participants currently

work at middle schools. Two participants work at the HS level, while one participant works at

the elementary level.

From the onset of this research, to cast a wide net within the state, Teacher Leader

Program Coordinators (TLPC) at other state universities were contacted to help in recruiting

participants. The TLPC forwarded the introductory letter once appropriate authorization from

their respective schools had been obtained. According to Rosa (2015), it is essential to collect

data from different participants as it will better the chances that the researcher captures a diverse

cognitive, cultural, social, and emotional experiences of participants. To create a thriving

teaching-learning environment, all the needs of the stakeholders must be taken into

consideration. The TLs elaborated on some of the challenges they are facing and how they can

be solved in the short and long term.

Sampling Procedure

Purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling technique, which does not require a

certain number of respondents or underlying theories (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Additionally, purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to identify and select a specific

population (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). The identification

and selection focus on a group of the population who are experienced or knowledgeable about a

specific subject area. Hence, purposeful 'criterion' sampling was used in this study to select a

post and near graduation in-service TLs (Patton, 2002). The criteria of inclusion and exclusion

are specified adding to the rigor of this research. The target population or individuals should be accessible and enthusiastic to participate while communicating their experiences and views in an expressive, clear and insightful way (Palinkas et al., 2015). This suggests purposeful sampling helps researchers to choose what is required and finds the individuals that are forthcoming when presenting their views based on experiences as well as knowledge (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Unlike random probability sampling, purposeful sampling focuses on individuals with certain characteristics that can assist in gathering relevant views.

There are different types of purposeful sampling including extreme cases; critical case sampling; criterion sampling, total population, and expert sampling. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), critical case sampling is a purposeful sampling method employed in an exploratory qualitative study in a small size of the population. Critical sampling is essential when it comes to determining if an in-depth exploration is justified. On the other hand, expert sampling requires that the investigators look for experts in a certain area as the respondents (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Generally, purposeful sampling concentrates on saturation. Moreover, in this sampling technique, the study population is chosen in accordance with the ability to provide relevant and unique information for the teacher leadership study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

This study includes adults who have earned a graduate degree (masters, specialist, or doctorate) in teacher leadership or have less than 9 graduate hours until they complete their program from a traditional university system. It was not necessary for each participant to have his or her teacher leadership state certification as it may not be applicable for that participant's position. It is, however, a requirement of the state that a candidate earns a TL graduate degree

from a traditional university system in order to be eligible to take the certification exam. No participants were denied the opportunity to contribute to the research-based on broad categorizations such as race, gender, ethnicity, etc. Age, however, is necessary to note, as this study only pertained to adults. Moreover, this study required that participants are currently working in a pre-K-12th grade public or private school in order to understand their roles within the most up-to-date school environments. TLs, however, were not held to a specific amount of in-service teacher leadership years. Wanting to explore the spectrum of teacher leadership experiences, the range from a new TL to a veteran TL is welcome.

Categorization demographics such as race; ethnicity; gender; disability; etc. was not specifically asked or used as a criterion, however, these may be reported through the participant's statements or optional field if they wanted or felt that information to be relevant to their story. Personal information was voluntarily given from the participants, but categorizations were not used as a criterion to screen individuals away from the study. Those unwilling or who did not meet these requirements would have been excluded from the study. Moreover, individuals who had obtained a leadership endorsement, certificate, or other credential through a non-traditional route would have been excluded from participating. Keeping in mind this research focuses not only on the TL but the preparatory graduate program in which they were enrolled.

Instrumentation

Fusch, & Ness (2015) recommend the use of more than one source of data to triangulate and ensure a rich and in-depth understanding of the topic being studied. The primary data was sourced using surveys with open-ended questions and an interview. Fusch, & Ness (2015) approve the use of this tool to collect first-hand data that might not be accessible through any other method. Other sources of qualitative data such as documents were welcomed to be shared,

but were not collected from these participants. These documents could have been emails with

teammates, minutes from various meetings, professional development presentations, or other

handouts or resources they provided for their staff.

Data Collection Procedures

The first step was to obtain the IRB approval through my university. To widen the pool

of potential participants, TL program coordinators within the state were asked if they would send

a brief letter of interest to possible participants for my study. Four of the six coordinators

contacted forwarded my email. An introductory letter and consent form were sent out to eight

respondents' personal email addresses. After receiving the participants signed consent, the

survey document was sent out via email. The online survey (Appendix B) was distributed to the

personal email addresses through a participant-only shared word document. Participants were

given the option of doing an interview in lieu of the survey. The interview guide (Appendix C)

was used with one participant (Participant 5) via phone. Participants were given two weeks to

complete the document and email it back. An email was sent to notify the participants of the

receipt of their survey and to thank them for their time contributing to this study.

Triangulation of Data

The data collected has been analyzed through data triangulation from the participants

responses, the program staff, and other researchers. Furthermore, the results were mostly

consistent with the literature from previous research and studies as reported through peer-

reviewed journals, articles, studies, and books on teacher leadership roles and programs, with

some notable differences, which were analyzed further in the findings section. The literature was

obtained primarily from the University System 's digital-library using specific keywords. A

rationale for each survey question and how it aligns with the research questions are depicted in

Appendix D.

Surveys

Open-ended surveys are a useful method in qualitative research because they allow for

participants to reveal their experiences more candidly (Brace, 2018). Open-ended surveys are

not rigid like close-ended surveys which may only permit very specific responses. Open-ended

surveys allow participants to express their opinions, experiences, stories, attitudes, feelings, and

explanations. Though there are disadvantages to surveys, such as lack of time or the

participant's preference to verbally talking about experiences, an alternative method of data

collection, such as the interview was an option given (see Appendices B and C) to the

participants. Brace (2018) and Kellner (2004) state that there is less pressure on participants who

contribute by a survey.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview was offered in collecting further data from the participants

after the survey, which one of the participants was willing to do. Barton (2015), elaborates that

interviews are an excellent elicitation technique that allows the research participants to express

their real-world experiences, and the data collected will add to the study. The semi-structured

interview allows the researcher to ask questions about teacher leadership and further explore

different elements of the research. Since they are less wordy, they will allow the researcher to

provide a personal experience of the topic. One interview was used to triangulate or further

support and provide clarification. The interview with Participant 5, was scheduled and

performed via phone for the convenience of the participant. The interview was transcribed

immediately after to ensure accuracy, decipher any missed words, and to give the interviewee an opportunity to check its accuracy.

Fundamentally, this study adopted the interpretivist approach since the goal was to understand the social world from the respondents' view (Soss, 2015). In this approach, a social relationship aspect was used to seek comprehension of their world. Additionally, people develop subjective meanings directed to certain elements. Such meanings are varied and numerous, which made me look for complexity in views in addition to narrowing them into categories. In most cases, the subjective meanings were negotiated in a social and historic manner that operates in the participants' lives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The use of semi-structured questions allowed me to understand one of the participants in her true environment while maintaining focus on the three main research points. According to Jamshed (2014), semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews where the participants respond to open-ended questions while staying focused on the subject matter. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews can be used to identify insights from the respondents' perspective. For these reasons, surveys and a semi-structured interview were selected for this study because they allowed for focused and textual information about the impact of teacher leadership programs on graduates and the pre-K-12th grade school system. By and large, the surveys predominately helped to gather rich and in-depth data for understanding the phenomenon under study.

Documents

According to Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon (2015), for one to develop an understanding of theoretical sampling, different data types should be considered and selected. A document, in this instance, was the surveys. They served as quality resources to be used throughout the research process. Further documents such as school improvement plans, reports

from schools, handouts, and newsletters, teacher-leader resources, professional development

(PD) designs, among others could have been submitted, but the participants did not offer any.

Those materials may have been beneficial by providing more information and data about what

that participating TL does. Or, perhaps, it was beneficial for participants to not show documents.

This could have led to participants directing their focus on their PD. As mostly every study

within the literature review reported, research was based on what TLs do and how they are

helping their local school, rather than having the TL be the focus of the study. This study set out

to focus specifically on the TL. Having documents may help tell a TL's story, or it may have

kept the participant from talking about their personal experiences.

Data Analysis Approach

Data obtained were analyzed using thematic and content descriptive analysis approaches.

According to Braun et al. (2019), the strategy involves a systematic analysis of data to identify

emerging themes, patterns, or other observations that are similar or different based on

respondents' views. In the context of this report, data analysis involved finding common themes

through an in-depth description of respondents' experiences. Smith and Osborn (2007) suggest a

thematic analysis of data from the surveys and interviews. These methods helped to compare

and contrast participants' views thereby reaching an informed conclusion regarding the

phenomenon explored in the study (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected from the individual surveys and interview were analyzed by first reading

through all the answers and transcripts. Given the small group of participants, charting their

responses was an analytical tool used to document data in a reflective, systematic, and

transparent manner. For the interview, ExpressScribe was used to help transcribe the recorded

interview. Graphing and creating tables with the data assisted in coding and learning the

relationships between the participants and what underlining themes ultimately did emerge.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential for all research studies, because a researcher is

gaining information from a respondent's lived experiences (Klenke, 2016). Permission to

conduct the research was first sought and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Prospective respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. TL program coordinators

and all the participants were clear on the research process and how the data would be gathered

and used (Doyle & Buckley, 2017). Such information allowed everyone taking part in the study

to make an informed decision about whether to partake in the study or decline the invitation.

Privacy and confidentiality have been ensured by not including personal information on the data

gathering documents or on a publication of the report. Anonymity was maintained by keeping

the data on a password locked laptop and destroyed completely after the publication of the study.

Individuals were allowed to exit the study at will without notice (Doyle & Buckley, 2017).

Individuals were not enticed or coerced to take part in the study. Participants were also given my

personal contact information in case of any issue that was to arise, a need for clarification, or a

request to share the final report findings.

Validity of Interpretation

Quality research must show that the findings are credible, dependable and transferable.

According to Heale, & Twycross (2015), an excellent quality research study should ensure the

reliability and validity of data and processes used are highly prized. Many types of research

have been conducted on how qualitative research can become faulty, and it is the role of the

researcher to address these issues. The integrity of the data should be upheld to ensure it is

aligned with the research questions and objectives. Ethics has been applied throughout all the stages within this research to ensure consistency in the findings. For authenticity and to ensure the data was not influenced, spelling or grammatical errors were left uncorrected and as the respondent answered within the survey. Since the study is sure to be published at least once when completed, it may be used as a foundation for other research on teacher leadership in pre-K-12th grade school systems in the future. The strategies in Table 2 were used to check the applicability, consistency, and trustworthiness of this qualitative study.

Table 2.

Strategies for ensuring applicability, consistency, and trustworthiness.

Validity of Interpretation	
Strategy	**Implementation and Application**
Audit trail	A detailed account of the research process was recorded.
Triangulation	Multiple data sources are used to reassert the data.
Adequate data collection	Data was gathered from multiple participants to guarantee adequacy in the data collection process.
Participants check	Participants will verify the researcher's interpretations to improve the accuracy of data collected.
Researcher's position	Self-reflection was used to check bias and assumptions, including context of the researcher.
Peer review	As the study progresses in different stages, a discussion was done with colleagues who will serve as peer reviewers.
Documentation	Participants' surveys are included through the analysis and within the appendices.

Context of the Researcher

It is significant to acknowledge my role as a researcher as I am near the completion of my doctoral program and I am currently a full-time teacher. Taking a personal interest in a study is at the core of most researchers and it is this connection to the topic that keeps researchers motivated. Being embedded among my current staff as a TL has been a valuable way to

authentically take on the TL role, and the researcher role while working through my courses, continuing to teach, and preparing for and passing the state exam. I can relate to the TLs within this study, and I am very familiar with the education system in the United States and within this state. By bracketing myself to protect the research from any preconceptions or personal biases, it is imperative to note the data and findings are directly correlated with quotes to the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Revealing all the participants' responses ensures all data remains transparent and authentic to the participants' answers.

Limitations and Delimitations

Some limitations to this study were using a smaller number of participants, as this helped me gain insight into the phenomenon, but did not become a conclusive representative of all TLs. Other limitations were opening the study to one southeastern state in the U.S. The data sample was small, relying on seven surveys and one interview.

Delimitations for this study was that the participant must be a current pre-K to 12th grade teacher. The participant must have graduate from a TL graduate program or be near graduation with nine or less hours from a traditional collegiate institution. Participants were not excluded based on taking or passing the TL state certification. Yet, only participants from one southeastern state were included to keep the program data and state requirements consistent and aligned.

Summary

The outcome of this study offers some invaluable information to the existing literature on teacher leadership programs. The results of this research add to the previous literature on multiple areas of TL. The results can inform and guide future teacher leadership programs by offering suggestions of what are authentic best practices for teachers, administrators, schools,

leaders, and districts, to reach their school goals, and current culture, and to reach out and advocate for their community's needs. This research may serve as a benchmark for institutions that look forward to introducing or revising their teacher leadership programs. The outcomes of this project may be disseminated through the university, school district, local school, administration, conferences regionally and nationally. Further dissemination may be done through publications of articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings that were acquired through the open-ended surveys, semi-structured interview, with the literature review conducted previously. The results presented in this chapter have facilitated the understanding of the impact a preparatory teacher leadership program has on its graduates as well as the work TLs perform in the pre-K-12th-grade school systems.

This study set out to understand the impact teacher leadership programs have on TLs, how TLs are using their programs within their careers, and the impact TLs felt they were having at their schools. To better understand teacher leadership, these research questions can be segmented into two main overarching aspects that the study focuses on, which are the preparatory TL graduate programs, and being a TL in a traditional preK-12th grade school system.

Findings

The findings of this research offer a detailed account of the views of TLs regarding the impact of preparatory teacher leadership programs on the graduates and their current roles in schools. Excerpts obtained from the open-ended surveys have been analyzed to support the findings. Using the participants' surveys, the three research questions have been answered fulfilling the objectives of the study. Direct quotes by the participants are presented under the survey questions which correspond to one of the three research questions. These were then compiled through an interpretivist lens to learn of three key themes about teacher leadership. The survey results serve as the best-evidenced description of the true characteristics or nature of teacher leadership. The TLs' answers address their acquired skills and knowledge, leadership practices, as well as the factors impacting their professional development as TLs.

Data Analysis

Each of the data tables (Tables 3-22) within this chapter show one of the 19 survey questions with each of the participants' answers. Tables 3 and 4 are both based on the first survey question. The research questions are answered through specific survey questions. The rationale for the survey questions (see Appendix D) and how they directly relate to answering the research question is explained before the set of tables. Some questions have additional prompts (e.g. lettered a-h). These prompts were given to further assist the participants in elaborating their answers and to help spark the participant's memory. All of the quotes are original and taken from their surveys (see Appendix E). These tables helped to deductively code responses through the categorizations derived from the research questions. These data tables increase the transparency, validity, and rigor of this study using the participants' responses.

Results vis-à-vis initial research questions

Research question 1. What impact do teacher leadership programs have on TLs?

The first survey question (Tables 3 and 4) asked was used for each participant to analyze his or her graduate program. The first prompt was also used to learn the scope of each participant's degree program, the coursework, personal support systems, professional development, and basic level of enjoyment or hardships felt through each program. The rationale for the second through fifth survey questions (Tables 5-8) was to examine the participants' motivations, experiences, hurdles, and preparation for state certification. Another rationale for these survey questions was to learn what TLs felt was valuable or useful to them during their programs or in their jobs, and what they felt their programs were lacking or needed to be improved.

Table 3

Survey Question 1 with prompts a. for research question 1.

	1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
Participant	**Length of program? Cohort, at own pace? Online/in person?**
1	Cohort Model, but I took a two-year break between the two years of coursework because of my spouse's job relocation and starting a new job myself.
2	Online program, 2 ½ years of coursework (12 courses) and 1-year dissertation minimum (9 credits minimum)
3	Cohort
4	Cohort 2 years, the other teachers in my district who started at the same time had all the same classes with me.
5	Cohort 4 semesters Specialist in TL
6	Cohort 2 years
7	Cohort, but pacing was off because I had to take some semesters off here and there. The program has taken years.

Table 3.1

Survey Question 1 with prompt b. for research question 1.

	1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
Participant	**Coursework**
1	TL Masters
2	Was challenging and overwhelming to navigate because of new concepts on more or less a self-taught environment. Although professor was available for some video conferencing, emails, and/or phone calls at times, the students' diverse experiences made it hard to relate to in other than general terms.
3	n/a
4	The coursework was set up as modules with discussion posts and weekly papers or quizzes. It was very fast paced in my opinion and the courses moved very swiftly and smoothly. I could work at my own pace during the week but there were weekly deadlines to be met.
5	dis-favored disenfranchised African-Americans rather than all groups. Many more groups than just African Americans to think about.

6	There were a few classes that I realize now were prepping me for the state certification.
7	Online, there were some workshops that were optional but available

Table 3.2

Survey Question 1 with prompt c. for research question 1.

	1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
Participant	**Capstone Project**
1	Portfolio
2	Beginning of Project was more self-guided to complete
3	Portfolio
4	There was not a capstone project.
5	electronic portfolio
6	Related to my PLC coordinator position. I felt this was one of the things that really did prepare me.
7	Yes, we had to do a final project, and do a dissertation, and work on the state certification

Table 3.3

Survey Question 1 with prompt d. for research question 1.

	1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
Participant	**Dissertation process**
1	n/a
2	Process is self-taught and self-guidance to complete overall. Although the scheduling is curbed to student, a specific process or plan was not laid out at the beginning, so as a student working and answering questions, it is hard to prepare in many ways for the discussion that occurs.
3	n/a
4	n/a
5	n/a

6	I'm in that now. I am passed the comps defense and in the process of fine-tuning my first three chapters for the IRB. I feel that I want to be much more hurried than the committee.
7	In progress

Table 3.4

Survey Question 1 with prompt e. for research question 1.

	1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
Participant	**Colleagues**
1	While I worked cooperatively with others, I did develop strong relationships with colleagues due to the online nature of the program, and my mid-program hiatus.
2	Were the saving grace for all of the courses I took at <u>uni</u>. If I had not had my colleagues to discuss the information and help plan how to complete assignments, it would have been twice as difficult and frustrating. I would not have been able to go through the program without my colleagues' help and support.
3	Cohort but we didn't do a lot of collaborative projects. I had to collaborate with my work colleagues for PD.
4	Most of my colleagues were classroom teachers looking to earn a master's degree or on their way to pursuing the Ed. Leadership degree which I may eventually do but for now I am "schooled out".
5	Getting colleagues to participate in each task was a pain as no one really wanted to do any extra work. It was just getting anyone who was willing to participate, you had to get a certain amount of colleagues that you had to work with. They didn't want to do it.
6	I have met awesome people through the program. It really helped that first semester when we were told to find critical friends. They have truly proven to be a critical need for me.
7	The support from my cohort group was really important to me, but I didn't feel like we could get as close as we would have if we were in classes in person. But there is so little time to actually get to campus, plus all the additional duties we do.

Table 3.5

Survey Question 1 with prompt f. for research question 1.

	1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
Participant	**Experience when bringing your grad program into your school.**
1	My supervisors were extremely supportive as I implemented projects from my grad program with my peers at school. I took on increased responsibility at work.
2	Difficult. Although most colleagues were willing to help, the time needed was far less than would be given on a regular basis.
3	n/a
4	My administration was very supportive in allowing me to take on some leadership roles within the school to fulfill some of the requirements of the program such as leading some professional development for the staff and conducting parent nights. My principal tagged me for several roles that would help me to exercise some leadership at the district level as well.
5	This was an easy task as my administration is so easy to work with and support all learning.
6	I have been blessed with very supportive co-workers and administration who allow me time to work on coursework because they know it is focused on our school and it has the potential to help the school, not just myself.
7	I used strategies of professional development and how to teach adults and gear learning more toward them, rather than the younger students.

All of the seven participants were in an online cohort model (see Table 3). The length of time and coursework vary between the participants depending on the degree program, institution, or personal breaks. A capstone project or electronic portfolio was needed for each of the participants. Three out of the seven participants are in a doctoral program. All participants commented that the colleagues within their programs were important to their completion. However, each participant noted that they are not as close to their classmates as they may have been with an on-campus cohort. All participants worked on professional development within

their schools. Two participants reported difficulties bringing the program into their local schools

due to unsupportive colleagues or administration.

Table 3.6

Survey Question 1 with prompt g. for research question 1.

Q.1 prompt g	**Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program.**
Participant	
1	Balance was very difficult for me during this degree program, and honestly may prevent me from pursuing a specialist or doctoral degree. Between work, family, and church (my husband is a pastor, so we are very involved), grad school was a low priority for me, but I wanted to be able to invest more time and energy to get the most out of the program. This caused me to be bitter and resentful about my coursework, and often brought me to tears.
2	Very difficult. My husband has had to shoulder the majority of the child and home responsibilities during the semester weeks that I have been enrolled. I would not have been able to be so close with completing this program if I had home and child responsibilities. I have had to curtail social activities/excursions with family and friends, hobbies, leisure activities, and some family activities just to ensure that I could complete the coursework and work full-time. In my opinion, the TL program is conducive for working professionals to take two three-credit classes each semester.
3	It was hard. I had to manage my time as well as I could.
4	I was able to balance my career as I was in an office setting and not the classroom during the two years I went through the program. I was still coaching *sport 1* in the Fall and *sport 2* in the Spring and somehow, I managed to get my coursework finished each week. I might have let some of the laundry pile up from time to time or not have made as many meals for my family of 6 during those two years but they survived. I don't think I could have managed as well if I had been in the classroom with lesson planning and grading demanding some of my time as well. I was stretched thin, but I kept the end in sight. I've never felt more relieved or accomplished than when I graduated. I felt even more relief when I submitted by portfolio to the state certification and later received my passing score.
5	I had it easy with balancing everything as my husband is also a teacher and he helped out with family/home while I was able to balance career, coursework and any obligations myself.
6	This was perhaps the hardest part. Finding time to accomplish it all is difficult especially when one goes home from work. Having small children in the home does not permit quiet work time, and I feel like I have missed out on some things.

	However, I make sure I am transparent with my children and let them know why I am doing this.
7	This was really hard to balance. I have a family, two young kids, so family obligations, and an older member who we take care of. My school also takes up so much time, and the kids and the extra work is a lot, plus the costs of tuition and books.

All of the participants noted having difficulties balancing career, family, and obligations while in the degree program (see Table 3.6). All participants mentioned the lack of time as being the biggest hurdle. All participants, however, have managed to master time management well enough to get through or finish up their higher degree programs.

Table 4.

Survey Question 2 with additional prompts.

	2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school? What do you currently teach? What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more?
Participant	
1	I teach 5th grade math. I lead our small group (5) of 5th grade math teachers. I frequently attend PL, and redeliver to my colleagues. We have PL for content, assessment, and behavior management with frequency.
2	High School/ Co-Teaching. Weekly PLC for Science Department
3	6th I assist with PD if asked. I'm team lead too.
4	I am currently in a position created by the superintendent in each high school in our district. It is called Teacher on Assignment and the principal can use the position and person in any way they deem necessary to increase the school's score. I am sort of a graduation coach working with at-risk students. Being a Spanish teacher, I work with the Hispanic population in our school translating for parent meetings and making contact with parents for teachers. I also oversee the RTI/MTSS (Response to Intervention/ Multi-Tiered System of Supports) program in our school as well as manage all of the students on 504 plans. I'm sort of a jack of all trades, master of none, except speaking Spanish, that I can do well.

	Currently I'm participating in a book study with the administration and department chairs on leadership. I'm also going through MTSS training with the state coach for our district.
5	I currently teach 7th grade SS and 7th grade ELA. I look for my own opportunities as this school has favored teachers that get to attend any outside professional development. District wide, we have days built into the schedule that students have off and we have PD.
6	Middle grades, one 6th grade ELA class I help coordinate professional development district-wide and in my school. We utilize PLCs to the fullest and try to base agendas on teacher needs.
7	MS Science. I show ways that teachers can integrate technology and other subjects along with some project-based learning.

Six of the seven participants teach at the high school or middle school levels (see Table 4). All participants frequently attend professional development. Five out of the seven participants coordinate, facilitate, or assist with PD. Every participant has been team lead. Participants have shown to seek their own PL opportunities from administration at their local schools. However, it is the district leaders who have created more opportunities for TLs. For example, Participant 4's superintendent created a high school position called, Teacher on Assignment, so that she may have the time to do what the principal needs to increase scores. Participant 5 stated that her district has built PL days into the calendar.

Table 5.

Survey Question 3.

	3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your program that you've used in your career?
Participant	
1	Understanding how different working with adults is, than children has been helpful for me. I am better able to build relationships with colleagues and lead them as a peer, whereas before, I felt more need for authority, in order to lead.
2	Useful Parts - how to prioritize, organize, write, and discuss topics, analyze data and other reports to narrow down to the pertinent information I am looking for to help answer questions or help find sources to resolve issues.

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3	Working with my colleagues has helped. It has also helped me reach out to other departments and collaborate with them. I don't feel as isolated in my grade as I used to.
4	One of the most useful courses I took was on RTI. I've been better able to instruct teachers on how to determine a baseline, set a goal and select an appropriate intervention for use with their students. I feel confident answering questions about what data to collect and how to determine if an intervention is working or not.
5	Just building relationships has been great. This program has built up my self-confidence as a leader and I have been able to work with the new administration to create a Literacy event for students, parents, and community. I hope to add more events like this permanently.
6	My capstone and the process of reflecting on my own practices.
7	Learning how to work with adults.

Six of the seven participants reported that working with adults and developing authentic relationships with colleagues were two of the most useful parts to all participants (see Table 5). These TLs found many valuable assets from their TL preparatory programs. Some of the reported benefits are learning how to build collegial relationships; best practices in teaching fellow adult-learners; supporting collaborative efforts within their local schools; utilizing resources, and developing a reflective process toward their practices.

Table 6.

Survey Question 4.

	4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for?
Participant	
1	I wish my program had better prepared me for the state certification, and while they are making strides forward in this for future cohorts, I do not feel adequately prepared. My colleagues taking classes through *uni* are much better prepared.
2	I hoped the TL program would allow me to become more proficient in the classroom and more confident with how to find and integrate material, strategies, and techniques to become a more well-rounded teacher.
3	I was hoping this program would help me become more of a mentor or someone who could do more peer observations and help from there. I haven't had as many opportunities to do that yet as I would have liked to, due to time.

4	I went into the TL program because another colleague had already done all the research and I just needed to get a master's degree. I figured if I did eventually decide to go into administration, it would be a good steppingstone. I had no expectations, but I really felt my eyes were opened to the importance of teaching reading and sound instructional practices. My coursework reinforced for me some things I had always placed an importance on in my own instruction as well as gave me some new perspectives. I don't think there is anything I hoped it would better prepare me for, I went in with an open mind and tried to get the most out of it that I could.
5	I think the program could have prepared me better for doing the tasks. Not a lot of the coursework was really geared towards the actual tasks in themselves but seemed to push an agenda.
6	I feel the relationship aspect of the teacher leadership program was lacking. How do we deal with the resistance we sometimes feel from co-workers who we have worked with for years? It gets into a sticky situation when you are now mentoring them or expressing leadership.
7	I do not feel prepared for the state certification process at all. The tasks that we had to do were not aligned or sufficient enough. I had to take an extra semester to do more work at my school to get the tasks done for the portfolio. This exam is ridiculously hard compared to other exams, so I've heard, and the program is not as offered or supported. The whole process is confusing to me.

Participants 2 and 4 hoped to work more on instructional practices (see Table 6).

Participants 1, 5, and 7 were hoping for more assistance with the state certification. Participants

3 and 6 hoped for more relationship building skills. Participant 6 hoped to learn how to cope

with resistance toward TLs. Participant 6 expressed frustrations with administrators not allowing

more time for mentoring opportunities and peer observations.

Table 7.

Survey Question 5.

	5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you.
Participant	
1	Not complete yet. Plans to complete by this Nov.
2	I have not taken it yet. I believe I have one year from my graduation to take it and I have not found the time. Additionally, I am reluctant to pay for another certification that my district has expressed that they do not consider valuable unless

	the position I am in is in a leadership role they approve. This whole experience has made me feel slightly jaded and really question why the degree is even offered by an accredited institution if my school district will not recognize an accredited degree. To pour salt into my open wounds, the state mandates that I have one year until the time I graduate to complete and pass a portfolio to become certified to be a Teacher Leader that I just spent almost four years devoted to from a state accredited institution. My district explained they do not require this certification for me to be selected as an Academic Coach.
3	I'm still getting all of my state cert. projects together. It's extremely time consuming and I don't feel as prepared for all these tasks through my program. There is a lot of extra work for the state cert. that I did not know I was going to need to do. So, I am taking extra time to get all my work together and do more PD before I submit everything.
4	The state certification process was something that caused me anxiety from sunup to sun down every day until I completed it. I had a difficult time wrapping my mind around what exactly I needed to demonstrate and how I could select artifacts to support the tasks well. I was bigger than any task or portfolio I completed for my master's program. I passed by only 4 points which was a relief and quite frankly, I didn't expect to pass by that much.
5	Currently in the certification process. I am registered and have begun to put tasks into the submission system.
6	I have not taken this yet.
7	I'm still gathering all the work together. Some participants have been difficult to get forms signed from, or they are too busy to continue with participating.

Table 7 shows how the participants' responses vary greatly about taking the state

certification. Four of the seven participants are working on the state exam. Two participants

have passed the state exam. Participant 2 expressed major concerns after being notified that her

district may not honor her degree and state certification. She plans to take the exam, regardless.

Research Question 2: In what capacity are TLs utilizing their graduate program within

their careers?

Survey questions six through ten align with how these TLs are utilizing their graduate

work within their careers. These survey questions and answers helped to stud how TLs are

received at his or her local schools. Understanding the direct correlation of degree to practice

TLs can inform graduate programs and school districts in the future by appreciating what TLs do

and the skillset TLs come with. These questions also helped to learn of the participants'

motivations and goals. TLs prefer to work directly with their staff and community. It is

imperative to discern how different schools, along with colleagues and administrators are

working with their TLs.

Table 8.

Survey Question 6.

	6. How did you first start to imbed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader?
Participant	
1	My skillset and personality allowed me to become a teacher leader. Conversations with administration allowed me to take on more formal roles.
2	I had to become a team leader. These positions are appointed by the principal.
3	I've always been pretty outgoing at my school. I'll help or volunteer when I can. My child goes here, so thankfully it's been easier time wise to manage that. My colleagues know they can come to me to talk and discuss anything from school work to students to administration.
4	The superintendent created a new position in each high school designed to give the principal a person and a position that they could tailor to help increase the school's CCRPI score. The position is titled "Teacher on Assignment" and the principal can assign duties and responsibilities as they see fit for their school. I am the Teacher on Assignment and my assignments include working with the incoming freshman who struggle to acclimate, working with at-risk seniors who may or may not graduate (kind of like a graduation coach), I am over RTI and 504 so I work with teachers helping them to understand goal setting, selecting appropriate interventions and progress monitoring for RTI. Since there is a lot of flexibility to the position, I merely explained to my principal the program I was in and let her know I was willing to take on some leadership and needed the experiences. I was allowed to direct some professional development and lead some parent nights in partnership with the math department.
5	I started out by talking to administration and getting their perspective on how I should go about it. Then I tweaked their advice and have volunteered to take on leadership positions, such as spearheading the literacy event.
6	I have always been a type-A personality. I decided to try to further my degree a year after my superintendent asked me to lead PLCs. I spoke with her personally and she encouraged me and expressed her support.
7	I was team lead, and liked doing that position. I just decided to see where this degree would take me too.

All seven participants show self-motivation to become a TL (see Table 8). The

participants reported having the support and encouragement of their administrative at the start of

the program. The TL candidates looked to their administrators for guidance and advice. The

participants describe themselves as leaders, outgoing, having a Type-A personality, with a

willingness to go beyond requirements for their positions.

Table 9.

Survey Question 7.

	7. How have your experiences changed since you graduated? (or close to graduating)
Participant	
1	None. During the program, I picked up more responsibility, and that has stayed the same since graduation.
2	While I am still working on my doctorate, I feel that my experiences have changed greatly already. I am very confident in what I suggest and discuss with other co-workers.
3	I'm still a pretty new graduate, but I feel like I'm at a standstill. I feel like I've been prepped and prepared, but it's like they don't know how to utilize me or put me somewhere. I'm hoping that will change in time because I've requested to do more observations and mentoring in the future.
4	Nothing has changed since I graduated, some of the duties and responsibilities I was given to help me through my program I still have and will probably have indefinitely. More teachers approach me for coaching with RTI than before as I have established myself as the go-to person for anything RTI-related.
5	The new administration this year has made things a little easier. I have built up a few more relationships within the community as well as the school.
6	I haven't graduated quite yet.
7	It hasn't changed much, except that my position may be changing from classroom to the EIP small group students. MS-science teacher.

Since starting their advanced degrees in Teacher Leadership, all of the participants have

continued with responsibilities they took on during the program (see Table 9). Administrators at

the local schools have not changed roles, schedules, or allowed for more time of TLs. Although

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Participant 4 was given a role by the superintendent (see Table 8); her local administrators have

not changed what she does. According to the responses shown in Table 9, six of the seven

participants noted not seeing any change in what they do at work because they have taken on

additional roles during their graduate programs.

Table 10.

Survey Question 8.

	8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program.
Participant	
1	I am a more compassionate leader of my peers. I realized that relationships matter in leadership, and it doesn't matter how good I am, and what I know, unless I can effectively communicate those things with love and grace.
2	I believe that my teaching has become more meaningful and more in-depth how I implement the activities, strategies, and techniques used. This is an effort to integrate and/or layer the curriculum to provide the maximum amount of learning possible.
3	The other teachers would come to me informally, now I feel like they come to me more formally. The role hasn't changed, but it just feels a little more formal than before.
4	I am more willing to put myself out there as a resource for other teachers since completing the TL program. I feel I am more comfortable having those conversations and helping teachers to feel at ease asking me anything. I am more confident in my own abilities.
5	Before the program, I would not have dared to mentor someone. I had no confidence in my being able to mentor someone effectively. After going through the program, I have more confidence and the strategies to improve my mentoring and teaching.
6	I feel I am much more reflective in my practices now. I take pride in putting more planning into my lessons. I have to set an example.
7	I feel more confident doing PD. Before I got so much anxiety about talking in front of everyone. But now, I'm getting better. I've actually gotten a lot more confident during parent conferences, and during district visitors. They aren't as intimidating as I felt they were before.

Six of the seven participants stated an increased desire to create deeper relationships with

their colleagues (see Table 10). Several benefits that the TLs' mentoring practices have

encouraged are: better communication skills, the self-confidence has grown with all participants

to put themselves out there more. Participants allowed reported a decrease in anxiety over

helping others, with an increased self-confidence as a leader. Participant 6 noted an increase in

reflectiveness about her practices and professional development planning.

Table 11.

Survey Question 9.

	9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration?
Participant	
1	I'm respected by my school community. My colleagues see me as trustworthy and reliable. I'm seen as someone who is creative, good with data, helpful to others, and strong in the classroom.
2	I believe my colleagues admire my drive and determination to complete my doctorate. I believe my administration is irritated by me showing any signs of knowledge of their school processes and outcomes. I believe the families and communities I serve are confident with the choices I provide or decisions I help make in conjunction with them. I believe they realize that my decisions are in the best interest of their child.
3	I get along with pretty much everyone on the staff. My admin has known me for a while now. They are willing to work with me and use me more. So, we are going to think of a plan for this for next year. But it is just hard to balance where they could put me, where they may want someone who is more of an AP, and a disciplinarian.
4	My colleagues view me as a dependable resource and know I have an open-door policy. They also know that nothing they share with me leaves my office. I hope they view me as a confidant. My administration view me as a valuable asset to the school. We lost 6 allotments last year and my position was one of the options they had as a position they could cut and all of the administrators agreed that they needed me and my position. That was affirmation to me that what I am doing is making a difference. The families I work with are generally grateful and feel comfortable contacting me with any concerns. I am generally able to diffuse a situation with an unhappy parent and help them. The counselors who work on my hall have overheard a few of my interactions with upset parents and remarked that I handled the situation very positively.
5	I feel my colleagues view me in a more positive light as a leader. Administration knows they can assign something to me and I will get it done efficiently. In talking with parents and members of the community, they say that they like what I'm doing in the classroom with the students and look forward to working with me outside the classroom at events and such.

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| 6 | For the most part, I feel supported by all. I do have a few co-workers who have been working here longer than me that I perceive to feel a little animosity towards me at times when I am asked to do or lead something. |
| 7 | I get along with my colleagues really well. I think with the position change, that affects how they view me, or just what role I'm playing now within the school. I get to talk and interact with a lot more teachers at various grade levels now. |

All participants who are still in the classroom have had positive feedback from their administration and colleagues (see Table 11). Participants 2 and 6, both feel supported overall, in spite of having reported seeing signs of hostility from a few staff members. Six of the seven participants remarked that their colleagues get along well, and feel emboldened to reach out to them, should they need support personally or with help with parents, instructional practice ideas or mentoring. Participants 2, 3, and 7 are in discussion with their administration about ways in which they can be utilized. Participant 3, stating that their administration may have wanted more of a disciplinarian.

Table 12

Survey Question 10.

	10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?						
Participants	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Stay in the classroom	X				X	X	X
Train or coach other teachers			X	X		X	
Change to a central office position						X	X
Go into administration				X			
Facilitate PD	X				X	X	
Advocate for others						X	X
Other, please specify		X					

Table 12.1

Survey Question 10.

	10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?
Participant	
1	For now, I'd like to continue classroom teaching. In the future, I can see myself working for RESA and providing PL and support to a variety of teachers.
2	I am not really sure what I will do with my leadership degree. I enjoy the classroom; however, I do think I would like a change in the near future. All of the choices given sound interesting, however, I have not settled on any one specific use for my leadership degree at this time.
3	Train or coach other teachers
4	Checked boxes
5	Checked boxes
6	I'd really like all of these except administration. I have always said my intentions were not to become a principal or assistant principal despite my current principal's trying to convince me to.
7	Checked boxes

According to the responses shown in Table 12, there are three areas TLs would like to do with their degrees; facilitate PD, train or coach other teachers, and stay in the classrooms. Participant 4 may consider administration, whereas all the other six participants did not select or mention going into an admin. role. Participants who elaborated on a possible direction later on in their careers, all mention professional learning. Participant 6 specifically noted that an administrative role was not desired. (Table 12.1). It is the administrators who encourage TLs to go into administration.

Research Question 3: What impact do TL graduates feel they are having at their schools?

Survey questions 11 through 19 give us insight to the TLs' experiences during and post-graduate work. These nine questions give us more context of formal roles and where TLs see themselves within their schools. These questions help to learn about changes that may have occurred within the teachers' careers. The participants' responses help us examine the dynamics between their other colleagues and administrators. The perceptions of how they feel others are viewing or treating them are observed through these responses. This research question helps to understand what drives TLs. From the survey questions, we can better understand what roles and duties TLs are given. We also learn whether expectations from the TL is the same from what they hoped to learn and do with this degree, and what they are truly experiencing out in the education field.

Table 13.

Survey Question 11.

	11. What formal title do you have?
Participant	
1	I do not have a formal title. Classroom teacher.
2	Currently - Sp. Ed. Co-Teacher, High School – until recently, MI/MO Sp. Ed. Teacher, Jr. High School, Grade 7-8
3	Classroom teacher.
4	Teacher on Assignment
5	No formal title, just instructor.
6	Professional Learning Coordinator
7	Middle Grades Science, possibly changing

Table 13 shows the titles the participants use, six of the seven participants are classroom teachers, with one participant being a PL Coordinator. Three of the seven participants have changed or are discussing changing roles or titles. Participant 2 was moved from middle school to the high school. Participant 4 is now Teacher on Assignment from her former RTI intervention title but still does the same work. Participant 7 is in discussions with his administration to possibly change from the classroom into the intervention role too.

Table 14.

Survey Question 12.

	12. What roles do you serve in your school?
	    a. **Classroom or Leadership?**
	    b. **What do you do within your school and community?**
	    c. **Would you like more opportunities?**
	    d. **How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR**
	    e. **How do you feel about requesting less leadership roles?**
	    f. **If you were to support curriculum or a school initiative that you didn't agree with, how would you go about handling this?**

Participant	
1	Classroom teacher, grade level lead, continued opportunities for PL and redelivery to my peers. Requesting more opportunities, I think depends on the supervisor. I currently have a great rapport with my supervisors, and talking with them is honest and productive communication, so it is easy to ask for leadership roles. They appreciate me taking on more weight. I know how to advocate for myself and my family, and I am willing to accede leadership roles when needed, my supervisors are supportive.
2	Co-Teacher (I was just transferred over in October 2019), so I do not do anything within my school or community at this time. Unsure at this time about opportunities to add. I have never worked in a high school before, so I am not sure what opportunities are available. But eventually I would accept more leadership roles if offered and given the opportunity. Regarding the prompt question of not agreeing with an initiative: Well, interestingly, that is how I got transferred to the high school. I inquired (though an email) regarding an initiative being implemented into a Sp. Ed. Self-contained room. No one contacted parents, provided a written or verbal curriculum to implement this new program, or wanted to discuss how the program would improve the program already in place. No one from administration responded to my requests for more information or examples of

	how to integrate the program. I was transferred within 3 weeks of the program beginning.
3	I'm team lead for 6th grade. I'd like to mentor more. I would get feedback from my colleagues and see what their opinions were, and try to find a middle ground solution.
4	I am over RTI, 504, Saturday School (discipline consequence for tardies to class/school), online credit recovery for seniors, at-risk students and specifically seniors, I mentor 5 students, I assist with testing and probably a lot more that I can't recall right now. I'd like to be included in the administrator's meetings so we can be on the same page with some items. They do not view my position as administrative despite having some administrative duties. So sometimes, I'm left out of the loop. I currently feel I have sufficient leadership roles for the time I have. I feel that as a classroom teacher I was required to support a lot of initiatives that I didn't agree with and they were often tied to job performance, so I was compliant. I would be compliant but might seek to have conversations to suggest we look more closely at the purpose of the curriculum or initiative and see if we couldn't tweak it some.
5	Within the school, I am a classroom teacher, Student Council adviser, and Fundraiser guru. Within the community, I help plan school events to foster a positive community relationship. I would like to start a new club for students as well as one that involves the community. I seek out the leadership roles. I have no desire to request fewer leadership roles at this time. As for the curriculum/initiative that I didn't agree with, I would gather data to support my beliefs and present it to admin and anyone else that was involved in decision making.
6	I lead PL, on every committee we have, I think. Would like to have more coaching tasks. For the most part, I feel pretty open to expressing my like or dislike for a new initiative. I feel my administration is open to hearing all teachers' ideas, mine included. I sometimes request too many leadership positions. It is a balance of others telling me that I am "biting off more than I can chew" and me trying to please everyone and get everything done that I can.
7	I support students who need additional learning support. I feel like I would be able to help the other teachers so much more if my case load weren't so huge, and the other teachers told me or admin what they needed more from me. I have worked on integrating science standards with the other staff.

This participant group is a small yet very diverse set of TLs who have many roles (see

Table 14). Participants all desire opportunities and are open to it but are asking their

administrators to help guide them to the right position. For example, Participant 2 needs the

support and clarification of a Teacher Leadership role for the community. Participant 2 reported,

"…I inquired [about] an initiative being implemented into a Sp. Ed. Self-

contained room. No one contacted parents, provided a written or verbal

curriculum to implement this new program, or wanted to discuss how the program

would improve the program already in place. No one from administration

responded to my requests for more information or examples of how to integrate

the program. I was transferred within 3 weeks of the program beginning."

Participant 4 reported frustration with the lack of expectations from her administration, stating,

"…I'd like to be included in the administrator's meetings so we can be on

the same page with some items. They do not view my position as administrative

despite having some administrative duties. So sometimes, I'm left out of the

loop."

Participant 7 also reported frustration with a lack of direction from the administration. "I

feel like I would be able to help the other teachers so much more if my caseload weren't so huge,

and the other teachers told me or admin. what they needed more from me."

The roles these seven TLs perform at their local schools (shown in Table 14) are

classroom teacher; grade level leads, co-teacher, PD/PL facilitator; advocate; RTI; 504; Saturday

School (discipline consequence for tardy to class/school); online credit recovery for seniors [in

HS]; support at-risk students; graduation coach; mentor; student council advisor; fundraiser guru;

and community event planner.

Table 15.

Survey Question 13.

	13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader?
Participant	
1	The greatest challenge is working with other educators who don't want to learn and grow, who are happy with the status quo, and are just waiting for retirement. Additionally, teachers who don't think they need to grow are difficult to work with.
2	Administration can oftentimes feel threatened and believe you are not supporting their programs and overall vision for the school. They can seek retribution and have you transferred. I am very happy about the transfer overall and besides the fact that I was content with working at the Jr. High in my previous position. However, the transfer negates the leadership points in the coursework that working together collectively to align curriculum and actions will improve teachers, students, and school overall.
3	I haven't found many challenges. I think it's just a matter of being that in between, teacher and administrator. It's hard to not be able to be the AP and have more policy behind you, and manage time in the classroom and do all of your own work.
4	I believe the state certification was the biggest challenge I faced. As of now, I just take each task one at a time and do the best I can to stay on top of everything. I don't really feel challenged.
5	One main problem has been overcoming prejudices and cliques that have been in place here at my school since I was in the system as a student. This school likes to give opportunities to those that are from a long line of teachers or have power within the community.
6	Again, the balance seems to be the biggest obstacle.
7	I often wonder if this graduate program plus working on this state certification is actually worth it. I have more questions about what can I do with this, what am I doing, what are goals, or how can I help better achieve these goals? I feel supported in my school, just not used as I thought I would be. And again, that outcome has been vague.

According to the survey results indicated in Table 15, participants 1 and 5 speak about challenges with veteran teachers who do not welcome change. Participants 4 and 7 mention difficulties with the state certification process. Six of the seven participants believe the lack of balance or defined roles between TLs and administrators is one of the biggest issues.

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Table 16.

Survey Question 14.

	14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your graduate program or in your current position?
Participant	
1	My instructors were very supportive, as were my school, and my family. I was discouraged by the work load, particularly in my "internship" when working on my portfolio. In particular, because that portfolio did not align with the state certification.
2	Encouraging – that I feel I better understand the role of a teacher leader and how that can strengthen a classroom. Discouraging – That I had to spend more time learning on my own and did not feel the online classes prepared me for the real-world applications of being a teacher leader. In short, coursework did not feel relevant at all. Coursework gave very general overview of what is actually done in schools.
3	Graduate school took up so much time and costs a lot of money. There is a lot of sacrifices with continuing ed. But we signed up for it, so now it's a matter of dealing with the state certification.
4	I suffered a lot of anxiety and self-doubt during my graduate program because 20 years ago I completed the coursework for a master's degree in Spanish Literature, but never sat for the comps because I never completed the 7-page reading list in preparation for the comps. So, I feared that I would fail again, especially in terms of the state certification as it was necessary to complete the program. I had a lot of self-doubt. While I have now completed it, I have been encouraged by some administrators to go back and get my Ed Leadership add on to become an administrator. Their encouragement is flattering, but I'm still anxious and there is still a lot of self-doubt. As I take on tasks at school and am successful with them, it buoys my confidence, so now there is only the fear of more student loan debt. I feel confident in my current position and feel respected by many at the county level with whom I have participated in trainings and professional development.
5	The instructors at the college have been really encouraging and supportive. One thing that has been discouraging is the negative feedback from certain parents who are all about "it's who you know, not what you know". I don't even know how to describe it. It's just an old traditional way of teaching. Some admin. are okay with accepting new ideas with the exception of some of the teachers themselves. Admin is better than the teachers. A lot of the teachers are really old, and have been there for like thirty years. And they don't really like the new stuff. They don't like anything new. They just want to the worksheet, and have them do it themselves.
6	I have mostly only felt encouraged throughout the program. There have been a few professors that I feel didn't want to put the time into helping me improve or helping me in general. That wasn't always the case though.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

| 7 | There has been a huge lack of clarity on what expectations are from some of the instructors. Some have also been confusing, rude, or discouraging. Me and some of my cohort members have been met with hostility where the instructors were not helpful at all. There have been a few however that have been really helpful, supportive, and have tried to connect their coursework to be relevant to our final study and certification. If it weren't for *this specific degree* I think I would have gone with another school, or another doctoral degree. |

Five of the seven participants focused their positive and negative feedback towards instructors or coursework within the TL programs (see Table 16). While the other two of the seven participants focused their feedback on their workplace. The negative aspects reported about TL programs were the coursework load or lack of clear expectations on assignments, anxiety over the state certification, the cost of higher ed. and student loan debt. The positive aspects of the TL programs noted in the responses were about the instructors who were encouraging and tried to connect their coursework to be relevant in the workplace and for the state certification process.

Table 17.

Survey Question 15.

	15. Are they comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc.
	    a) Does the staff view you as an administrator?
	    b) How does your admin view you, use your time, etc.?
	    c) Do you facilitate PD or want to?

Participant	

1	Comfortable.
	        a. No, staff does not think me as admin. at all, but they know I'll advocate for them.
	        b. My admin appreciates all my efforts.
	        c. Yes, I do.

2	Seems uneasy about you going to school to complete my doctorate. I have gotten several negative comments regarding just going to school to be in charge. This is actually quite the opposite. This degree was a personal goal and was never my intention of being a part of administration.
	        a. No, staff does not think of me as admin.
	        b. As an adversary

	c.	Sure, if asked.
3	We get along well. a. The staff does not see me as admin., but there is more of a formal feeling, when everyone used to just stop by and vent or talk about things around the school more. b. We're still figuring this out. They're open to using me for whatever ways we are all comfortable doing that. c. I might in the future. I also think I might be starting to facilitate and manage the afterschool tutoring groups.	
4	They're comfortable a) My current staff is very comfortable with me and seek me out for various questions and needs regarding students. Some see me as admin, but most see me as a graduation coach. b) The admin is protective of my time not allowing me to be used as a substitute in the classroom when they are short substitutes, they value my time and the work I am doing and are protective of me. c) I have facilitated and PD and would be willing to do so at any time again in the future.	
5	Staff is comfortable and do NOT see me as admin. a) Admin keeps me in the classroom but gives me the time to advise student council and encourages any projects that I propose. b) I do not at this time but would like to.	
6	Some staff are uneasy. The ones that seem that way are the ones who have worked here forever or who hold the same current degree I do (before I complete this one). a) Sees you as admin now. Some do, but I hope they still see me as a teacher too. b) How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? They feel I am capable of doing many tasks. They know I will give 100% to whatever I am asked to do. c) Do you facilitate PD or want to? Yes.	
7	They staff is comfortable. Admin. Knows I'm willing and available, but I don't always have time to do the ideas we come up with. I have [done PD] for the program, but haven't since.	

Despite some issues seen in Table 17, as the TL program progressed, most participants reported the staff remained comfortable with them as TLs. However, there have been some negative outcomes contrary to the staff feeling comfortable. Participant 2 believes her administration views her as an adversary. Participant 6 has also seen a change in behavior from staff members with whom she used to get along, further noting, that her getting her doctoral

degree may have something to do with the change. All participants noted that they are willing to

take on responsibilities from their administration, however, they have not been given direction

on this. Participants were also careful to mention whether they are seen as administration. The

undefined role of the TL comes up again as these TL participants struggle to assure their

colleagues that they are not administrators. All participants agree with the idea that TLs are

teachers who still want to be a part of their school and students, but are willing to take on extra

work for their local school.

Table 18.

Survey Question 16.

	16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both?
Participant	
1	I feel very successful.
2	I am at a new school and I believe I am doing fine for beginning at a school and job that I am unfamiliar with. As a teacher, I need to continue to work on the new content and curriculum. However, although they do acknowledge I have experience and they seem to respect that, I do not think I am looked upon as a teacher leader.
3	I feel I am doing okay. I don't feel I'm doing as much as I was thinking, but at the same time, I am still teaching 6th graders and managing still being a teacher leader too.
4	I feel I am doing a good job and am valuable to the work in our school. I seek to be a resource for the teachers and to support them in their work with struggling students.
5	I feel I'm accomplishing a lot as a teacher and getting somewhere as a leader. I planned the literacy night, coming up on October the 22nd. But I can't hardly get any of the ELA teachers to participate. I've gotten one off of 6th grade, and maybe on one 8th grade, and it's just me on the 7th grade. And that is what I'm dealing with. And I don't know if this is because I'm in a school from a really small town, because when I worked in another district there was more parent involvement in both levels.
6	I feel like I am doing great, especially considering the fact that I am currently working on a thesis.

| 7 | I feel good at my school. My school culture is fairly open. Again, I just question whether this was the best degree option, or how I can better use it with my staff and for admin. |

All participants shared feeling good or better about being a TL when it comes to self-confidence about their roles (Table 18). However, this is contrasted by several concerns the participants have discussed about some backlash from others as noted in Table 17. All participants show a desire to maintain his or her current classroom role, but also to be resourceful for others at their local schools.

Table 19.

Survey Question 17.

	17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change?
Participant	
1	More responsibility can be overwhelming at first, but it becomes routine, and it definitely worthwhile.
2	By my transfer of schools, I would say that I inquired about the alignment, resources, and curriculum too much. I was only trying to ensure that I as the classroom teacher and teacher leader were implementing programs and supportive curriculum that would ensure that the I and the school were adhering to the curriculum guidelines and Special Education guidelines and parameters.
3	It hasn't changed my position.
4	My degree has not changed my position, it has certainly helped me have a wider lens through which to view my responsibilities, but my duties and responsibilities have not changed.
5	It really hasn't changed my position at the school. I'm okay with that. I prefer to stay in the classroom.
6	I have recently stepped into more coaching, but I don't know if that is based on my degree pursuance or the fact that our academic coach left this year.
7	It hasn't changed my position, but I feel I've earned the respect of my colleagues more.

All participants stated their positions or roles being a teacher leader had not changed since graduating or nearing completion (see Table 19). All participants eagerly took on more responsibilities. Although their roles have not changed, Participants 2 and 4 noted feeling a fuller responsibility to their position.

Table 20.

Survey Question 18.

	18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position?
Participant	
1	n/a
2	I have gained more knowledge regarding the overall educational system. It is both interesting and unsettling. In my opinion, the educational system is more fragmented than I originally thought. With a new perspective also come new burdens of trying to work harder to resolve more of the problems that I see. I have become more vocal in that I question more and have a broader picture of the educational system and what it takes as a teacher, teacher leader, and collectively as a school, district, and nation to try to improve.
3	After graduating, the time school took up is nice to have, although I am still really busy. The state certification has taken up a lot more time than I ever expected too. I wish I was more prepared for all of this. And there is so much writing too that goes along with the tasks.
4	It has not.
5	I'm more involved with school events and community events and I like it. I'd still like to be in the classroom. I really don't want an admin position. I want to be with my students.
6	I feel more empowered. If I can do this, I feel like I can do anything. I used to dread doing school work because I was always second-guessing myself, but now I feel confident in my abilities.
7	I feel more confident as a teacher leader. I'm in a lot more debt than I was before. And I'm getting closer to getting my family and life back to a routine as my program should be ending soon.

The participants' diverse roles and degree programs offer a wide range of answers (see Table 20). Two lingering issues mentioned are debt and state certification. Four of the seven participants found one of the positive outcomes has been feeling more empowered and able to

voice his or her opinion. Two participants mention getting the time back into their lives that

were devoted to their programs.

Table 21.

Survey Question 19.

	19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader?
Participant	
1	n/a
2	Although I have enjoyed learning many aspects of this program (not all), I am not sure if I would select the TL program again. I wanted to go to back to school for my doctorate as a personal goal and to possibly propel my career if I ever felt I wanted to leave the classroom at any point. I only really wanted to enhance my classroom teaching and co-workers and the school. As a Special Education teacher, I truly believe that most of the teachers and many of administrators (current and previous) that I have ever interacted with, do not think that as a Special Education teacher, that I have anything to offer as a gen. ed teacher, much less a teacher leader. I have received numerous sighs, eye rolls, and "oh's" from others when they learn what my doctoral degree will be in once it is complete. I even had a teacher tell me that maybe I could get an add-on in Educational Leadership to actually do something with my degree. The degree will fulfill my desire for knowledge of the educational system (somewhat) and the personal goal I set. However, I do not think it will propel my career in any way at this point. I have already been told by my district that they will not pay for my certification upgrade to a T-7, because they do not consider even a doctoral degree in Teacher Leadership as any enhancement with my teaching skills in the classroom unless I was selected for an actual leadership position such as Lead Teacher, etc. The only value that I can see with the a TL degree presently is knowing that with perseverance, determination, intrinsic motivation, help from peers in the virtual classroom, and support from my family that I can accomplish my goal that I set and do anything I set my mind to do.
3	I think it's like walking that middle line. There is the teacher and there is admin. So, where someone fits in, in between those two roles is something that my administration and I are still working on. I think we can start with tasks that I could take over for them, like peer mentoring, helping with new staff members, managing tutoring, etc. and maybe it'll grow from there.

4	n/a
5	Talk to people who have attended a teacher leadership graduate program at a variety of schools. Research the schools and make a wise choice. All programs are not built the same. I am happy I decided to attend _uni.1_. I chose _uni.1_ over _uni.2_ because of the bad reviews from people who had attended the TL program at _uni.2_.
6	I feel the grad program can sometimes be quite vague and uncommunicative in its requirements and requests. For example, many professors have given us assignments that they do not or (worse yet) cannot elaborate on. It is frustrating to say the least.
7	I think it's one thing to be a teacher-leader, it's a whole other endeavor to go through a doctoral program to get there. I think if roles were more defined and there was more time allocated toward teacher-leadership duties then it would be viewed as a more important separate or specialized area. At schools now, it's as if it's a given that some will take on these roles. Those who choose to do it for a formal graduate degree are a very different motivated group of individuals.

From the five participants who elaborated further about their TL experiences (see Table 21), they all comment on the vagueness of content within the program, or undefined TL roles within their workplace. Participant 2 had received unfavorable comments from a colleague about her degree program being futile. Participant 3 states, "There is the teacher and there is admin. So, where someone fits in, in between those two roles is something that my administration and I are still working on." Participant 7 summarizes his perceptions on TLs by asserting, "I think it's one thing to be a teacher-leader, it's a whole other endeavor to go through a doctoral program to get there…Those who choose to do it for a formal graduate degree are a very different motivated group of individuals."

Analysis of Findings

This chapter intends to achieve several study objectives highlighted previously, including assessing the need for TLs in pre-K-12th-grade schools, offering a precise understanding of the need for collegiate teacher leadership programs, as well as how principals and other staff view TLs. The second key area is the influence of teacher leadership graduates on their schools or

institutions, including the kind of work TLs do in the pre-K-12th-grade school systems to signify

and affirm their professional development. This chapter supports the rationale for using a

constructivist lens where lessons acquired from the past and newly acquired learning are based

on the context of the teacher leadership programs, which addresses the third research question

"What impact do TL graduates feel they are having at their schools?". This chapter addresses

two major themes that have emerged from the data on teacher leadership: relationships, and

working within the confines of a systematic norm. This chapter includes dissecting the nature of

how a TL feels about his or her effectiveness and competence, along with how a TL fits within

the PreK-12 public school system.

Perception of the Impact of Teacher Leadership Programs on TLs and School Effectiveness

Essentially, the first and the very initial research question predominantly endeavored to

explore the common perception of the impact that teacher leadership programs have on TLs as

well as the overall pre-K-12th-grade school effectiveness. Expanding the research question

further has led to identifying the skills and the knowledge that TLs may need to play their

leadership roles effectively. As such, the two identified themes addressed in the research

question have highlighted the views of the participants about the impact of teacher leadership

program by describing succinctly how the graduate program aided the teachers to execute their

leadership practices, improve their understanding of the responsibilities and roles associated with

teacher leadership, and identified the right skills and knowledge that help them to facilitate these

roles.

The participants' responses indicated that the most dominating hierarchical model of

leadership impacts the nature of the teacher leadership at the pre-K-12th-grade school and; thus,

the schools' effectiveness as well. Conventionally, teacher leadership programs could be

justified as a creation meant to engage teacher leadership graduates in stretching beyond the

classroom instructions while contributing to the school on a wide range of areas, including in the

development of curriculum, preparation of teaching materials, tests, and examinations, and

supervision of teachers. Generally, the participants' perceived teacher leadership programs as a

novel concept, which is essential for pre-K-12th-grade school systems as it demands TLs to

possess certain leadership skills and knowledge to effectively execute their roles. This is

evidenced in the response given by one of the participants as reiterated here;

> "I hoped the TL program would allow me to become more proficient in the
>
> classroom and more confident with how to find and integrate material, strategies,
>
> and techniques to become a more well-rounded teacher" (Participant 2).

This excerpt shows that the TL program impacts greatly in the pre-K-12th-grade school

system by helping TLs to have a proper understanding, skills, and knowledge about their

responsibilities and roles and how they would improve the effectiveness of their institution of

learning. Nonetheless, other participants presented opposing thoughts relating to the relevancy

and demystify the importance of the TL programs. For instance, when asked to comment about

the course, the participant engaged in the semi-structured interview registered her disinterests

and displeasures in the program, "No, I didn't care for that course" (Participant 5). Similarly, the

third participant expresses the bad side of the TL programs instead, they say;

"Graduate school took up so much time and costs a lot of money. There is a lot of sacrifices

with continuing ed. But we signed up for it, so now it's a matter of dealing with the state

certification" (Participant 3).

The Nature of Impacts of Teacher Leadership Programs

The initial theme drew on the perception of participants about the impact of the teacher leadership program while explaining the implication of the TL program to the real leadership practices both at the middle and top levels and at the same time, describing the role of the program in reinforcing teacher leadership practice at pre-K-12th-grade schools. Moreover, as one of the objectives of this research was to explore and understand how becoming a TL has impacted the TLs, it seems to be a great idea as nearly more than a half of the engaged study participants could not account for the transformations or changes they experienced after having attended and graduated from TL programs. A participant was quoted saying,

"Nothing has changed since I graduated, some of the duties and responsibilities I was given to help me through my program I still have and will probably have indefinitely. More teachers approach me for coaching with RTI than before as I have established myself as the go-to person for anything RTI-related." (Participant 4).

It is evidenced that despite having attained teacher leadership qualification, this participant, much like the other participants, was able to apply the leadership knowledge and skills effectively. Participants may take on additional roles with or without a degree program, but it does not mean the redelivery, PD, support, or mentoring would be up to par with those that have obtained the leadership skills through their graduate programs. This makes their experiences to be the same without any significant change. Participants have taken on additional roles for coursework purposes or through agreed-upon roles from administrators. An administrator could have placed a TL in a role to fulfill course work, with the assumption that the TL would continue the same work post-graduation. Similarly, the seventh participant also

confirmed that nothing significant has changed for them since graduating from the program.

Regarding their leadership experience and background, the third participant perceived the idea of

the teacher leadership program as a knowledge gateway that impacts teachers and the pre-K-

12th-grade school systems at large in many ways, which is though dependent on the leadership

roles as well as the requirements.

> "I was hoping this program would help me become more of a mentor or
> someone who could do more peer observations and help from there. I haven't had
> as many opportunities to do that yet as I would have liked to, due to time"
> (Participant 3).

According to the view of this participant, the teacher leadership program is an initiative that,

when conducted appropriately and successfully, would transform ordinary teachers to not only

becoming TLs but rather mentors capable of influencing collegial peers positively. In this

perspective and in relation to the literature review, the thoughts are held that teacher leadership

programs yield professionally developed and qualified instructors that execute a diverse range of

operational and instructional roles that are responsible for enhanced academic achievements of

students and general effectiveness of the entire school (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015; Sanocki,

2013). Since the remaining six participants expressed partial lack of knowledge of the impacts

of the teacher leadership program, Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) and Lai and Cheung (2015)

contribute an informative definition of the teacher leadership. These scholars referred to teacher

leadership as a key element of effective restructuring of the school while focusing on advancing

the professional development of the educators (Fairman and Mackenzie, 2015; Lai and Cheung,

2015). Consequently, one of these participant groups observed and recognized that the

definitions provided by these scholars are enlightening and have more of similar features as well

as implications to the teacher leadership role and responsibility they studied in the TL program.

Precisely, when sharing about thoughts believed to be relevant to learning about teacher

leadership program, one of the participants responded;

> "I think it's like walking that middle line. There is teacher and there is admin.
> So, where someone fits in, in between those two roles is something that my
> administration and I are still working on. I think we can start with tasks that I
> could take over for them, like peer mentoring, helping with new staff members,
> managing tutoring, etc. and maybe it'll grow from there." (Participant 3).

Constructed on this argument and response, it is clear how the participant has a similar view or

perception of the teacher leadership program as that defined by the earlier scholars. Contrarily,

other participants have failed to recognize the significance of the TL program of which they

express adamantly when asked whether there are changes or improvements in their lives since

graduating from the program. A participant responded, "it has not" (Participant 4), which

implied they could not account for any specific benefit from the program; thus, it justifies the

need to abandon it. Additionally, the majority of participants appeared to perceive teacher

leadership program as a transformative undertaking geared towards enhancing a holistic

professional development of TLs by strengthening their academic background, enriching their

professional experiences as well as responsibility related skills and knowledge.

> "I have gained more knowledge regarding the overall educational system. It is
> both interesting and unsettling. In my opinion, the educational system is more
> fragmented than I originally thought. With a new perspective also come new
> burdens of trying to work harder to resolve more of the problems that I see. I
> have become more vocal in that I question more and have a broader picture of the

educational system and what it takes as a teacher, teacher leader, and collectively

as a school, district, and nation to try to improve" (Participant 2).

From this response, it must be noted that having graduated from TL program, the participant

does no longer regard teacher leadership as a mere extension of certain bureaucratic structural

education systems, but rather an exercise of skills and knowledge-based mentorship role that

focuses on solving more problems in the education system while ensuring improvement in the

achievements of the students. However, the participants have raised an important negative side

of the program by indicating that despite having gained a lot of knowledge about the pre-K-12th-

grade system, the concept of the TL program is still unsettling though.

Moreover, when the participants were asked questions about what some of the most

useful parts of their TL program has been, the majority of them mentioned several operational

and instructional roles at pre-K-12th-grade schools. For instance, the second participant

considered the role of the TL program as basically instructional and it depends on the expertise

of the teacher in a given area.

"… useful part- how to prioritize, organize, write, and discuss topics, analyze data

and other reports to narrow down to the pertinent information I am looking for to

help answer questions or help find sources to resolve issues" (Participant 2).

Grounded from this response, the role of teacher leadership as instilled in TLs is more

instructional as the graduate leaves the program endowed with skills which they would use to

organize, prioritize, and analyze issues for solutions. By acquiring all these qualifications, it

easily justifiable that TL programs impact TLs by training them on leadership-specific skills and

knowledge. Nonetheless, six other participants considered the most useful part of the TL

program in transforming TLs as managerial, operational, and transformational. Therefore, these

roles were characterized into three main teacher leadership waves by Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan

(2000) which was later transformed by Sanocki (2013) into four teacher leadership waves, which

include operational/managerial, instructional, introduction to transformational, and

transformational leadership aspects matched.

Table 22.

Four waves of Teacher Leadership, Sanocki (2013).

1st Wave Operational/Managerial	2nd Wave Instructional	3rd Wave Introduction to Transformational	4th Wave Transformational
Decision making for school activities, managing examination materials as well as venues, handling of e-learning services, departmental head, organizing PD workshop, teacher union representation, heading of institution (e.g. headteacher), working on issues of quality assurance, counselling of students, monitoring classroom hours of teachers, supervision of projects for joint researches, publication of research papers, facilitate classroom issue effecting teachers, specialist in material development, development of examinations and tests, preparing schedules and plans for teaching, etc.	Specialist in professional development, Specialist in curriculum development, Supervision of teachers, giving teachers feedback, coaching and training junior staff members, giving PD workshops, etc.	Mentoring of teachers, making decisions on behalf of the school, advocate for teachers' rights, institutional change agent, role model, and mentor teaching colleagues, Transformation of the learning environment, etc.	Education facilitator, optimize student learning, focus on more meaningful leadership in the schools, curriculum development, conducting accreditation processes for teachers (e.g. state certification), monitoring attendance of teachers, and organization of schools through collaboration with colleagues, stakeholders, and society at large, etc.

The responses given by the participants indicate TLs have a wide collection of operational responsibilities and roles to play such as decision making for school activities on behalf of the staff, preparation of teaching plans and schedules, managing exam and test materials, and monitoring office hours for teachers among others. Teacher leadership in the second wave plays mostly instructional roles as well as responsibilities such as supervision and mentoring of teachers, development of the curriculum, and coaching and training of teaching colleagues among others. However, their work here at some point involves managerial roles as well, as the third participant explained;

> "… I think we can start with tasks that I could take over for them, like peer mentoring, helping with new staff members, managing tutoring, etc. and maybe it'll grow from there" (Participant 3).

Teacher leadership roles in the third wave now get introduced to involve in the transformational responsibilities such as making decisions on behalf of the teaching staff, advocate for rights of fellow teachers, serving as a role model and mentor to junior teachers, and yearning to transform, completely, the learning or teaching environment within the schools. The data collected also showed that the majority of the participants in third-wave transformational positions often went and extended their responsibilities beyond their assigned roles to coach and influence their colleagues to achieve the tasks assigned to them (e.g. as an evaluator, facilitate, coacher). For example, when the sixth participant was asked about the roles they serve in their school, specifically those opportunities that they would like to be offered, she responded, "more coaching tasks". Moreover, the participant proceeded ahead and highlighted many other responsibilities that associate with transformational role, that is;

"For the most part, I feel pretty open to expressing my like or dislike for a new

initiative. I feel my administration is open to hearing all teachers' ideas, mine

included. I sometimes request too many leadership positions. It is a balance of

others telling me that I am "biting off more than I can chew" and me trying to

please everyone and get everything done that I can" (Participant 6).

By this statement, the participant indicated specifically that sometimes s/he requests to be

given several leadership responsibilities which, indeed, confirmed that teacher leadership in

transformational role combines both bottom-up and top-down approaches as they aim to

facilitate their fellow teachers as well as the management by adopting and using more flexible

methods. And lastly, in the fourth wave transformational position, a transformational leadership

type classroom is created such that the TLs begin to work in close collaboration with the students

to nurture a shared culture which contributes to the development of leadership skills through

learning. Therefore, TLs get to engage in full leadership functions, including making important

decisions that transcend to the transformation of the entire school; thus, the effectiveness of the

entire school. Some of the responsibilities undertaken under the fourth wave transformational

role, include optimization of student learning, emphasis in meaningful leadership at school,

ensuring accreditation or state certification for teachers, and so forth.

Generally, from the responses given by the participants, the TL program contributes

immensely to the professional development of TLs which offers an important insight into how

leadership structures, as well as practices, are formulated and implemented within pre-K-12th-

grade school systems. Indeed, the participants have explained the context in expressing their

view about what good leadership model should entail. Just like in the normal hierarchical

structure of many organizations, pre-K-12th-grade learning institutions in the United States have

often maintained their administration systems with hierarchical orders, both in terms of execution of duties and communication (e.g. top-down model of management). In other words, without the TL program, the pre-K-12th-grade school system had been managed by individuals who controlled and commanded authority over the teaching staff. Perhaps, it could be better described as a bureaucratic system, hierarchical, and typical top-down that is centralized from a common source of authority.

Moreover, the majority of the participants, considered teacher leadership programs as an initiative mean to nurture and enhance flexibility among TLs while improving the effectiveness of schools by shifting from the conventional top-down model of institutional management to share leadership culture, which gives teachers the opportunity to develop at least some leadership capacity.

"The superintendent created a new position in each high school designed to give the principal a person and a position that they could tailor to help increase the school's CCRPI score. The position is titled "Teacher on Assignment" and the principal can assign duties and responsibilities as they see fit for their school. I am the Teacher on Assignment and my assignments include working with the incoming freshmen who struggle to acclimate, working with at-risk seniors who may or may not graduate (kind of like a graduation coach), I am over RTI and 504 so I work with teachers helping them to understand goal setting, selecting appropriate interventions and progress monitoring for RTI. Since there is a lot of flexibility to the position, I merely explained to my principal the program I was in and let her know I was willing to take on some leadership and needed the experiences…" (Participant 4).

The description of the administration or management structure here by the fourth participant portrays elements of frequent or regular collegial engagements or interactions as well as sharing or discussion of views, ideas, and thoughts between the institutions' top management (e.g. the principal) and the TLs. The fourth participant emphasizes the importance of TL leadership programs for professional development even among the top leaders within the institutions. As such, it could be suggested that administrators already prepared to some extent to exercise the leadership and possess authority to compromise a situation involving the manifestation of leadership. Therefore, those in an administrative position may attempt to groom equally fit candidates from the TL program either at the graduate or doctorate degree level. However, all parties must understand the culture of the school and current trends to appreciate and attend to the complexities arising in the pre-K-12th-grade school systems.

Teacher leadership programs have helped with the scrapping of challenges associated with the hierarchical system of leadership by promoting and making easy for TLs to exercise the leadership role. Moreover, having taken place of the conventional top-down system of leadership policies, TL program has impact on TLs by recreating the context of workplace to a form which encourages collaboratives and supportive teaching and learning practices, especially for the benefit of junior teachers and the students body; thus, improving the effectiveness of the entire pre-K-12th grade school community. The TL programs, through developing and nurturing leadership skills in TLs, prevent school principals and unit heads centralizing leadership roles while giving junior teachers opportunities to develop leadership capacities. The fourth participant summarized it; "… I was allowed to direct some professional development and lead some parent nights in partnership with the math department" (Participant 4).

Furthermore, the information collected from the responses revealed that the TL programs helped mold TLs into persons with Type-A personalities and with the confidence to address people, not only the students and collegial teachers in the classrooms and school respectively, but also parents during conferences and district visitors. In other words, the data given show that the TL programs make the top managers in the institutions or pre-K-12th-grade schools show appreciation and support to TLs who make them overcome frustrations, stress, and anxieties and; thus, develop confidence that allows them to express their leadership qualities and skills. The view presented by the seventh participant is a good representation of the other six participants observed;

> "I feel more confident doing PD. Before I got so much anxiety about talking in
> front of everyone. But now, I'm getting better. I've actually gotten a lot more
> confident during parent conferences, and during district visitors. They aren't as
> intimidating as I felt they were before" (Participant 7).

From this quote, it is apparent that initially, the highly demanding and stressful roles greatly affected the performance and even to some extent, the rate of retention of TLs because their work environment did not offer them a conducive system that would inspire, motivate, and building their confidence, including in discharging their primary duties. For instance, while citing the element of anxiety and lack of mentorship programs, the seventh participant reported that TLs have often failed to adapt to the circumstances that demanded their instructional as well as mentor guidance which eventually led to teachers abandoning their career positions earlier. Nonetheless, difficulties associated with the teaching professional environment, especially in the pre-K-12th grade school systems, for the TLs is when their capabilities are overlooked when it

comes to decision making. TLs have often found it challenging to achieve their tasks assigned to them when time or coverage is not allotted to perform the tasks.

Fortunately, the findings of the study revealed that, with the introduction of teacher leadership programs and with the growing popularity of peer leadership roles, the majority of these TLs are now beginning to derive sufficient power from their existing positions within the institutional hierarchical structure to execute their authority to ensure their organizational objectives are not only achieved but are met within the scheduled timeframe. Nearly all the participants concurred that teacher leadership programs have enabled most of them, as TLs, to influence other collegial teachers and facilitate them in implementing institutional policies. However, it is surprising that, on the contrary, some of the participants did not appreciate the impact of TL programs in the development of their professional qualification, especially in terms of gaining the trust of their collegial teachers and closing the huge gap between the higher management and the teachers at pre-K-12th-grade institutions. The fourth participant narrated; "Nothing has changed since I graduated, some of the duties and responsibilities I was given to help me through my program I still have and will probably have indefinitely…" (Participant 4). This excerpt describes a sense of depletion; a lack of appreciation for what this participant thought she would get or change she would have from her teacher leadership program. This feeling of depletion has often transcended to negatively affect the relationship and interaction between TLs and their fellow teachers. It was further explained by other participants, that these situations have contributed to a deeper resentment unseen before from the teachers themselves. As Participant 7 explained;

> "Some of the instructors have been horrible, confusing, rude, or discouraging.
>
> There has been a huge lack of clarity on what expectations are. Me and some of

my cohort members have been met with hostility where the instructors were not

helpful at all" (Participant 7).

According to the perspective of several participants, their program has brought more

trouble to their professions and work environment in general than they had anticipated. Based on

the data and information presented in the above excerpt, the TLs have often perceived their

program instructors or coordinator as more of threats to their degree program, thus making the

candidate question their career path and causing such stress to the detriment of their general

wellbeing. Thus, an effort of TL programs to ensuring TLs are supported and instructors are

professional appears to be a problematic area and difficultly to overcome. Nonetheless, despite

all these resentments, the majority of TLs who took part in the study expressed their appreciation

of the teacher leadership program and narrated how they have managed, at least to some extent

since their graduation, to establish good and interactive relationships with their fellow teachers.

They would explain further how, through the teacher leadership program, they have been able to

gain and develop knowledge and skills to influence, mobilize, and motivate teachers within the

bureaucratic work environment to attain their organizational goals. Like other many participants,

the first participant indicated that having graduated from the teacher leadership program, he has

been capable to instruct and guide their teaching colleagues in getting things or tasks done. Here

is stated;

> "One of the most useful courses I took was on RTI. I've been better able to
>
> instruct teachers on how to determine a baseline, set a goal and select an
>
> appropriate intervention for use with their students. I feel confident answering
>
> questions about what data to collect and how to determine if an intervention is
>
> working or not" (Participant 5).

This piece of the data reveals the teacher leadership program offered the participants the opportunity to gain and develop autonomy to find various effective and efficient approaches to influence their colleague teachers, which indeed, has consequently reduced the adverse effects of centralized top-down system of management with the pre-K-12th grade school systems, especially in the United States. Still relying on the above-quoted excerpt, teacher leadership program facilitated the majority of TLs to gain capacities to create a more relaxed work environment void of excessive and unnecessary pressure for their collegial teachers for them to meet their organizational goals as well as the expectation of their top management (e.g. the principals).

Competency/Effectiveness of TLs in Schools

The competency of TLs is the second theme arising in this context and it gives an undoubted answer to the second research question "In what capacity are graduates utilizing the program within their careers?". As such, this theme describes exhaustively how effective or competitive TLs are after having graduated from the teacher leadership program, particularly in terms of applying a range of skills and knowledge they have acquired to facilitate them in their leadership role at the pre-K-12th-grade school systems. Consequently, the data revealed that the graduate TLs use various skills and knowledge to utilize the TL program at different capacities, depending on the areas (focal point) of specialization during the program (Table 23).

Table 23.

All participants possess and spoke about these leadership skills and knowledge.

Focal Point	Types of leadership skill and Knowledge
People	Persuasive, building rapport, ability to mentor teachers, knowing the potential in other people, etc.
System	Faculty evaluation, managing curriculum, etc.
Pedagogy (teaching)	Knowledge/idea of development in the pre-K-12th-grade school systems, research knowledge and skills, testing, knowledge of tasks, knowledge in best practices, knowledge of the curriculum, etc.
People and Place	Diverse teams and leading large groups, understanding of organizational culture, knowledge of socio-culture core values, etc.
Self	Multi-tasking, reflective, setting of realistic objectives and goals, etc.

Table 23 indicates that the majority of the study participants have good knowledge of the culture of their organizations, pedagogical practices, as well as the recent changes or development in the pre-K-12th-grade school systems. For instance, the emphasis on leadership knowledge for the organizational culture is narrated by the seventh participant;

> "I feel good at my school. My school culture is fairly open. Again, I just
>
> question whether this was the best degree option, or how I can better use it with
>
> my staff and for admin" (Participant 7).

Similarly, the data suggested that graduate teachers with specialization in various units (focal points) such as research and testing, curriculum, etc. emphasized largely the knowledge and skills that related to their tasks and roles. Moreover, the data indicated that a good number of the TL program graduates (e.g. seven participants) utilize the program by acknowledging leadership skills and knowledge mostly in the form of pedagogy and people and place as an

essential aspect of teacher leadership in the pre-K-12th-grade school systems. This seemed to

insist that every TL should enhance their competencies and effectiveness in utilizing the TL

program, particularly by ensuring the delivery of the curriculum is perfect as dictated in the

curriculum of the pre-K-12th-grade school systems. Likewise, the second participant explained

how they hoped the wide knowledge about classroom teaching gained from the TL program

would enhance their operational leadership role while observing as well as giving back to

collegial teachers; thus, making them become more competent and well-rounded teachers. Here

the participant narrated;

> "I only really wanted to enhance my classroom teaching and co-workers and the
>
> school…I hoped the TL program would allow me to become more proficient in
>
> the classroom and more confident with how to find and integrate material,
>
> strategies, and techniques to become a well-rounded teacher." (Participant 2).

Although this participant, in their response, mentioned the terms "skills" and

"knowledge" interchangeably, particularly when referring their extent of pedagogical expertise.

It is summarized that the participant regarded teaching knowledge and skills of classroom

pedagogies as very important for the teacher leadership at the pre-K-12th-grade schools.

Critically, it should be noted that the participants universally agreed whether a TL is serving as a

PD specialist or mentor, supervisor, or observer, they necessarily need to acquaint themselves

with a top cutting-edge classroom teaching knowledge as well as perfect teaching skills. This is

one of the approaches to determine the capacity in which most of the graduate TLs utilize the TL

program in executing their daily career duties or responsibilities. Just as it had been observed by

the third participant,

"I'm still a pretty new graduate, but I feel like I'm at a standstill. I feel like I've

been prepped and prepared, but it's like they don't know how to utilize me or put

me somewhere. I'm hoping that will change in time because I've requested to do

more observations and mentoring in the future" (Participant 3).

This participant confirms clearly that they have top-notch knowledge and skills in

classroom teaching, though they feel the institution is yet to utilize them. Some of the TL

graduates feel there is a priority on operational responsibilities therefore, an emphasis on policy

overrides whether a teacher is effective or may improve to be an effective leader or manager.

When one of the participants was asked about the significance of teaching (pedagogical) skills

and knowledge, specifically for instructional leadership responsibilities or roles, as well as the

capacity in which they utilize them in their career, the participant expressed a similar point of

view and dismissed teaching knowledge and skills for leaders, coordinators, as well as other

leadership roles. Despite having graduated from the TL program, one of the participants, though,

does not feel the new school acknowledged their leadership quality implying that it is worthless

for a teacher to acquire some leadership role unless otherwise serve in the managerial position

such as the principal or headteacher of the school. The participants narrated as highlighted in the

excerpt;

"… However, although they do acknowledge I have experience and they seem to

respect that, I do not think I am looked upon as a teacher leader" (Participant 2).

However, the data emphasized the need to appreciate the fact that teaching skills and knowledge

are crucial for teacher leadership roles, considering the fact even the top manager or leaders have

mandatory teaching hours slotted for them. TLs and administrators must prioritize a dialogue for

what roles the TL can take on to fulfill the needs of the school. Additionally, by summarizing

what the majority of the participants implied in broad terms, for the graduates to optimally utilize

the TL program within their careers, then they have to set as well as achieve fairly high standards

professionalism which could assure them of credible identity and status as TLs. In that regard,

implying to the significance of teaching skills and knowledge, graduate TLs utilize the TL

program to enhance the credibility of their professional development while impacting positively

on the efficiency of their roles in improving the effectiveness of their organizations.

Away from utilizing the leadership knowledge acquired from the program, graduate TLs

express their competencies in terms of their repertoire of skills learned, which indeed facilitate

their current responsibilities. Additionally, other participants believe it is through effective

cooperation and collaboration that they can utilize the TL program within their careers and;

therefore, they mastered true principles of cooperation and collaboration, especially when

pursuing compliance and trying to avoid any aspect of resentment within the work environment.

The third participant explained; "… Working with my colleagues has helped. It has also

helped me reach out to other departments and collaborate with them." Furthermore, in this

extract, the participant seems to exemplify his knowledge of places and people that supported

their roles and responsibilities of teacher leadership at the pre-K-12th-grade schools. Other

various leadership skills regarded most important and essential in their current positions were

also highlighted by other TL participants, which affirmed their effectiveness and competencies.

To summarize, graduate TLs should have a combination of leadership skills and knowledge to

signify maximized capacity in utilizing the TL program within their careers. Some of such skills

include cultural consciousness, communication, technical, leading from the front, absorbing

stress and pressure, task delegation, decision-making, conflict resolution, time management,

intrapersonal, interpreting and providing vision, influencing colleagues, communication, human

interactions, identify others' potential, and, strategic planning skills among others. Therefore, the data proved that, based on their competency levels, TLs' value and utilize certain skills that mostly contribute to simplifying their leadership roles or responsibilities at the pre-K-12th-grade organizations.

The following excerpt confirms this claim; "For now, I'd like to continue classroom teaching. In the future, I can see myself working for RESA and providing PL and support to a variety of teachers" (Participant 5). It is vivid that the TL quoted in the excerpt has found more value in the skill of identifying the potential in other people while supporting them achieve their organizational goals and objectives. This combination of skills defines the backbone of the TL's leadership role at the pre-K-12th-grade organizations. According to the general data, the majority of these leadership skills are relatively similar to the typical transformational system of leadership have to express their abilities to interpret and provide vision, influence, persuade, and facilitate fellows, and lead from the front while inspiring and motivating staff members. The seventh participant narrated in confirmation of this data; "I was team lead and liked doing that position. I just decided to see where this degree would take me too" (Participant 7).

From this selection, the TL participant is confident of their ability to lead teams, mentor others, and give guidance to colleagues. This leadership skill; however, requires an individual to have confidence, an approachable disposition, and reputation of being helpful in executing leadership roles. This is one of the traits highlighted in the literature review. Also, the participant expresses their passion to leading teams, which indeed, is a noble personality trait that allows TLs to understand as well as solve problem affecting colleagues while motivating and encouraging them for proper and effective functioning at the pre-K-12th-grade institution.

Nearly all participants reported to agree to have the passion to lead their fellow staff. Participants expressed that understanding their school's culture allows for them to have a better understanding of their colleagues and team interactions. TLs can approach their colleagues with empathy, and hope to maintain good connections with colleagues. These relationships are crucial for a TL's prosperity and success within their school. Moreover, this may also draw to conclusion that an effective accomplishment of a TL's role may also be to possess these personality characteristics.

Influence of Teacher Leadership Graduates on Their Schools or Institutions

Any lack of clarification about the role or responsibilities a TL may occupy will conflict with their innate desire to contribute to the school. TLs want to use the skillset and knowledge they acquired through their graduate programs. Thus, in order for TLs to have an effective influence within their school, their role must be defined and agreed on with their administration. Specific responsibilities give TLs a clear role to manage, helps to create goals for the teams they work with, and gives the TL the ability to plan accordingly to assist their staff. Subsequent themes that were drawn from the respondents are building on the lessons from the past and learning based on specific context. These themes support that idea that despite various operational challenges, TL graduates have been able to influence the situation positively into learning opportunities within the institutions or schools alongside their developments professionally as well. Exploring and affirming these themes offers substantive responses to the third and last research question "What impact do TL graduates feel they are having at their schools?" and how teacher leadership program graduates influence the effectiveness of their organizations.

Lessons Acquired from the Past

This theme suggests that despite the lack of availability or insufficient professional support, TLs have the potential to use their past experiences along with their more newly acquired leadership skills, and intrinsic motivation to develop a plan to assist with the improvement and conditions of learning in their respective schools. Examples of such personal motivation and effort initiatives include creating time to avail themselves for training and learning opportunities, adopting and observing collaborative and reflective practices, and maximally utilizing their acquired experiential learning skills. From the data, a group of participants concurred that, through their previous qualifications and training, they have nurtured the concept of shared leadership as a vital rationale for the implementation of effective and competent TL models. This step has subsequently translated into an improved overall culture of their schools or institutions. The seventh participant gave a response with a satisfying proof; "I feel good at my school. My school culture is fairly open. Again, I just question whether this was the best degree option, or how I can better use it with my staff and for admin" (Participant 7). This excerpt suggested that the participant, from the past qualifications and training, must have noted that the ultimate importance and purpose of the TL program as to support the vision and mission of shared leadership for an open organizational culture in the institution. This would also suggest that allocating time and resources to professionally support TLs and staff, would garner more long-term benefits.

Generally, besides the usual informal and formal learning at the pre-K-12th-grade school that is attributed to the professional development of TLs, collegial teachers as well as students have benefited from the past professional and academic experiences of the TLs. This is evidenced clearly from the available data which indicted that previous training, PD courses, and

qualifications most teacher leadership graduates have pursued in other disciplines before

ascending to the leadership responsibilities or roles at the pre-K-12th-grade school have equally

contributed in them transforming their institutions. With the leadership skills and knowledge,

the TLs could also train and nurture special leadership talents among the students as well as

collegial teachers. A participant described;

> "… My coursework reinforced for me some things I had always placed an
>
> importance on in my own instruction as well as gave me some new perspectives.
>
> I don't think there is anything I hoped it would better prepare me for, I went in
>
> with an open mind and tried to get the most out of it that I could" (Participant 4).

From the quote, it is observed that the participant had some ideas and knowledge about

what assuming a leadership role required and would be like, and so, this positively affected their

capability to influence the professional development of their collegial teachers in the best way

possible and specifically for the good of their entire institutions or schools. The prior knowledge

and experience were a result of them learning from the previous non-educational and educational

organizations which they drew to their current role after graduating from the teacher leadership

programs and; thus, influenced immensely. In these situations, the lessons they have learned

from the past has worked and facilitated them to survive in the bureaucratic system and ensured

success in the pre-K-12th-grade school system instead. All these teacher leadership graduates

wanted to achieve had been specifically for the benefit of their fellow teachers and the school at

large. A participant was quoted explaining;

> "… I wanted to go to back to school for my doctorate as a personal goal and to
>
> possibly propel my career if I ever felt I wanted to leave the classroom at any

point. I only really wanted to enhance my classroom teaching and co-workers and

the school…" (Participant 2).

Indeed, from this statement, the kind of impact TLs are having at their schools is very

tangible, including the enhancement of their classroom teaching skills, teaching performance of

their co-workers, and development of the entire school. As such, teacher leadership graduates

could be perceived to be contributing to an empowered school community where teachers and

students are knowledgeable and well-informed about current affairs. An open platform provides

more opportunities for shared decision-making within the organization as everyone, including

the students, would seek to be engaged in important decision-making processes. Nonetheless,

this finding could be refuted strongly by the idea generated in the literature review which

advocated for a centralized system of leadership as well as the decision-making process.

According to this school of thought, involving such several parties or stakeholders in policy

making is associated with delayed processes of decision-making (Young & Lewis, 2015).

Furthermore, with the presence of the teacher leadership graduates within the school, their

colleague teachers get the opportunity to nurture equal leadership skills, through interactions,

without necessarily requiring them to leave out of their regular classrooms to attend training,

seminars, or workshops. The fourth participant elaborated;

"I think with the position change, that affects how they view me, or just what role

I'm playing now within the school. I get to talk and interact with a lot more

teachers at various grade levels now" (Participant 4).

It is through this interaction that their colleague teachers benefit which is for the good of the

entire school. Moreover, a good number of the participants reported that they had already

acquired numerous experiences and qualifications in the education field, and their prolonged

exposure and interaction with diverse educational environments offered great insights into the

management of learning practices and; therefore, they would easily influence learning practices

in their current institutions with enhanced efficiencies and effectiveness upon their graduation as

TLs. Unfortunately, other participants, especially those who compared the program with their

previous experiences and found no differential benefits, have continuously despaired claiming

that it is both uncommunicative and vague in terms of the requirements and other conditions for

qualification. A participant explained;

> "I feel the grad program can sometimes be quite vague and uncommunicative in
>
> its requirements and requests. For example, many professors have given us
>
> assignments that they do not or (worse yet) cannot elaborate on. It is frustrating
>
> to say the least" (Participant 6).

This data was found incoherent though as another participant added that it was the

challenging experiences of their previous job role that contributed to their sufficient preparations

for the role they have assumed immediately after the graduation from the TL program.

Learning Based on the Context of the Teacher Leadership Program

This theme arose as a result of many of the participants pointing out the significance as

well as the importance of their professional development practices not only for their leadership

roles but also for the benefit of their institutions. Therefore, the participants highlighted certain

activities available for their utilization to benefit their organizations. Such activities included

conferences, presentations, seminars, state certification programs, workshops, etc. A participant

narrated; "Online, there were some workshops that were optional but available" (Participant 7).

This excerpt suggests a few PD opportunities are made available as a result of the TLs

graduating from the TL program, which consequently contribute to the development and

prosperity of the entire school community, teachers and students included. For example, the

state certification programs are mostly offered to TLs only after graduating or close to

completion of graduating from a TL program from an accredited institution. One of the

respondents recorded;

> "This whole experience has made me feel slightly jaded and really question why
>
> the degree is even offered by an accredited institution if my school district will
>
> not recognize an accredited degree. To pour salt into my open wounds, the State
>
> mandates that I have one year until the time I graduate to complete and pass a
>
> portfolio to become certified to be a Teacher Leader that I just spent almost four
>
> years devoted to from a state accredited institution" (Participant 2).

With this subsequent exposure to context-based professional development opportunities both in

the form of state accreditation, workshops, seminars, etc., the teacher leadership graduates are

empowered to influence the overall development and success of their schools or organizations by

disseminating the knowledge and skills acquired to their colleague teachers and students as well.

When the participants were asked to mention what exactly they would like to do with their

qualification degree in teacher leadership, many of them explained that they could improve the

achievements of their students through the effective implementation of a TL system or model,

specifically with their context-based rationale for implementation. Importantly, context-based

implementation rationales are best obtained when PD courses and programs are integrated,

especially after the graduation from the TL programs (Participant 3). Additionally, the data

suggested that effective inclusion of teacher leadership graduates into school offers good

opportunities for their colleague teachers and other stakeholders to collaboratively plan to

improve on the achievements of students, especially in core and basic context areas and; thus,

helping bridge the huge gap between the administrators and the teachers which subsequently

translates to an increase in the student achievements.

Contrarily, one of the participants argued that the opportunities for the PD courses and

other context-based programs are available; however, these resources are not as readily known or

as easily accessible to some teachers. There are many reasons teachers utilize some resources,

and not others. Some teachers are inundated with resources, they do not have the time or any

opportunities to explore everything available. Other teachers lack of awareness or are

unambitious as they feel set in their instructional practices. Having district funded PD courses is

a wonderful resource more teachers and schools should take advantage of. If there were a

specific PD training or courses a TL wanted, that was not sponsored by the district, their

administration may be able to allocate funds from another source to use for that training. From

the data, a participant is quoted narrating the issue;

> "However, I do not think it will propel my career in any way at this point. I have
>
> already been told by my district that they will not pay for my certification upgrade
>
> to a T-7, because they do not consider even a doctoral degree in Teacher
>
> Leadership as any enhancement with my teaching skills in the classroom unless I
>
> was selected for an actual leadership position such as Lead Teacher, etc."
>
> (Participant 2).

This data as highlighted communicates loudly about the inadequacy of the current

support and recognizes the severe lack of sustainable PD programs or projects for teacher

leadership graduates in the form short course, workshops, sponsored accreditation programs, etc.

In this scenario, it could be easily justified that the ultimate desire of teacher leadership graduates

to attend to PD courses and related programs had not been completely fulfilled as the stakeholder

alongside the concerned top management often failed to organize and avail the programs under

friendly conditions. A participant explained;

>"Some of the instructors have been horrible, confusing, rude, or discouraging.
>
>There has been a huge lack of clarity on what expectations are. Me and some of
>
>my cohort members have been met with hostility where the instructors were not
>
>helpful at all." (Participant 7).

In this excerpt, the participant did not only express their dissatisfaction with the program

but also their displeasure with how the program organizers, including the instructors, handled

them. The current projects could be somehow described as ineffective, scanty, and outdated and;

thus, prohibiting the graduate TLs from benefiting their institutions maximally. Comparatively,

whereas other participant TLs perceived the courses (especially the one-year accreditation

program) as highly important, others on the other side describe the programs as unnecessary and

disturbing. For instance, one participant commented positively about the program, "I have

mostly only felt encouraged throughout the program" (Participant 6). On the other hand, the

fourth participant describes the scenario in a negatively way;

>"I feared that I would fail again, especially in terms of the state certification as it
>
>was necessary to complete the program. I had a lot of self-doubt" (Participant 4).

The data reveal the overstretched mixed opinions that argue differently and hold varied

views. Therefore, there is a likelihood that the teacher leadership program might fail to meet the

requirement of context-specific and subsequently fall short of addressing the needs of TLs,

especially in empowering colleague teachers and enhancing students' achievements.

Alternatively, without PD courses and other support programs, the teacher leadership programs

are merely perceivable as idealized systems that could not match the pre-K-12th-grade school

curriculum. Nonetheless, in deeper thoughts, it could be comprehended that the concerned stakeholders might have maintained the status quo with the assumption that the teacher leadership could contribute to the improvement and development of instructional practices as part of the purpose of adopting the teacher leader model in the pre-K-12th-grade school curriculum system. Undoubtedly, an aspect of reduced variability in the instructional practices could be noted, and the assumption for the reduced variability could have been to have teacher leadership graduates follow the strict prescriptive and stringent instructional layout to enhance the quality of teaching.

Summary

The result and analysis chapter has presented the qualitative findings of the study which focused on exploring the impacts of preparatory teacher leadership programs on the graduate TLs as well as the effectiveness of the entire school. The data obtained from the participants have suggested that TLship programs produce professionally developed and competent teachers who are equally capable of serving as managers, mentors, and motivators for both their collegial teachers and students. Although, the data has partially disregarded the importance of the TL program, claiming it is worthless and unnecessary for the pre-K-12th-grade school curriculum system. The teacher leadership program graduate teachers are endowed with essential skills and knowledge which enables them to take on a variety of instructional, managerial, operational, and even transformational roles and responsibilities within the boundaries of a hierarchical structure. It is within this hierarchical structure that graduate TLs work or operate while linking the top managers to the junior teaching staff within the organization. The preparatory teacher leadership programs offer a supportive hub to nurture reflective and motivated practitioners in teaching who are capable of working seamlessly with their colleagues to affect improvement in their overall

practices while converting the associated contextual issues into great opportunities for learning

within their schools. Importantly, as much as the preparatory teacher leadership program is

largely confined by rigid bureaucratic structure, the graduating TLs would mainly be impacted

positively if and only if they develop a personal urge and genuine desire for learning and

understanding from their current context-specific responsibilities and roles. This effort is,

however, achieved if TLs take the initiative of deep reflection upon their varied experiences,

adopting and implementing collaborative styles of leadership, utilizing previous acquired skills

and knowledge in daily practices, and importantly, creating for themselves and colleagues

meaningful learning opportunities.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications

This last chapter summarizes the key findings of this qualitative study as well as explains their implications to TLs, district and school administrators, higher-ed programs, and the overall effectiveness of the organization (pre-K-12th-grade school). This chapter also establishes the contribution of the entire study to the larger body of knowledge within this specific field of teacher leadership. Also described are the limitations associated with the study, along with logical suggestions for further exploration in this topic with recommendations for further practice.

To begin with, this qualitative study was conducted in the southeastern United States with target participants being in-service TLs currently working in the state pre-K-12th-grade education system. The focus of the study was to explore the impact preparatory teacher leadership program have on the performance of TLs in leadership roles and the effectiveness of the organizations as a whole. Other objectives of the study include the assessment of the need for TLs within schools, to understand how becoming a TL has influenced the teachers, and how the TL felt they were. Based on the theoretical framework and the study objective, a qualitative method was chosen to help to elicit the in-depth responses from the participants through open-ended surveys and a semi-structured interview. The analysis of the obtained qualitative data shows major findings that conclusively answer the three research questions (see Figure 4).

Figure 4.

Data analysis through categories and themes. Stoddard, 2020.

Categories	
Teacher leadership graduate programs and certification	**Research Question 1.** What impact do teacher leadership programs have on teacher leaders?
Teacher leaders with staff and administration	**Research Question 2:** In what capacity are teacher leaders utilizing their graduate program within their careers?
Teacher leaders' self reflections	**Research Question 3:** What impact do TL graduates feel they are having at their schools?

Themes
Defining the role and duties of the TLs with their local administrators
Elevating oneself and the collegial culture within a school, while navigating through restrictive educational norms of established positions.

Figure 4 shows three main categories from the participants' responses that coincide with the three research questions posed for this study. The two major themes that emerged from the study, are (1) defining the roles and duties of TLs, and (2) how to a TL can elevate themselves and their schools while restrictive educational norms are still established within the system. To further elaborate on these emergent themes, Figure 5 explores the multiple ways TL can be integrated into a school system to support all levels of education with the most buy in from staff.

An interesting finding that supports the intrinsic motivation the participants shared, is that preparatory teacher leadership programs assist teachers to professionally develop their leadership knowledge and skills mostly through undergoing an intensive process of experiential learning. Nonetheless, before training and assuming the role of teacher leadership at the pre-K-12th-grade institutions, some of the participants often had some level experience in management either in

non-educational or educational organizations, leading, or training, which equally help them immensely in their bid to serve as TLs at the pre-K-12th-grade school. Although six of the seven participants do not have leadership qualifications or hold a specific leadership role, the participants felt that the TL program could mold them successfully into effective and professionally well-developed TLs for the benefit of their collegial teachers and students. The preparatory TL programs purposefully aim to offer exemplary opportunities for experiential learning and other complementary factors, which subsequently contribute greatly to the professional development of TLs; thus, translated to the improvement in the achievement of collegial teachers and student body in the pre-K-12th-grade school.

For maximum professional development, TL program candidates were often expected to facilitate PD, as well as be an excellent example for others as Participant 7 asserted. Therefore, to model this leadership, TLs should exhibit the attentiveness and keenness during and after professional development and collaborative learning days to allow for deeper reflections about their practices of leadership both collectively groups and individually. This reflective approach to learning would help them greatly in evaluating both their weaknesses and strengths, which would consequently contribute to enhanced practices.

Discussions of the findings

As one of the emerging themes, this study explored the perceptions of TLs regarding the aspects of teacher leadership within the pre-K-12th-grade schools. Consequently, the findings identified a deeply rooted system of top-down management which is directly attributed to the menace of bureaucracy that adversely affects practices of teacher leadership. As a result, graduate TLs continuously encountered resentment from their collegial teachers while on the duty of executing the mandated organizational policies. Therefore, the data has revealed the

intention of TL graduate programs to achieve formal institutional objectives and framework

through acceptable managerialism (conceptual, human, and leadership skills) that protect the

autonomy of TLs, while sustaining their professional support system and safeguarding their

fundamental rights to contribute to the professional development at the pre-K-12th-grade

schools. Moreover, the teacher leadership program also offers potential candidates an idea of

what exactly the role of teacher leadership entails at the pre-K-12th-grade school such that they

might execute them through coursework or in-field with higher precision. Therefore, the most

common categories of teacher leadership roles (e.g. operational/managerial and operational)

were found to be based majorly on the teaching/pedagogical credibility and expertise of the

graduate TL at the pre-K-12th-grade school; therefore, mainly classified under the second wave

of the teacher leadership as described by Silva et al. (2000). Under these leadership roles, the TL

is expected to lead from both the front of his or her classroom and beyond within the classrooms

of others, as they contribute to and identify with the other teachers. This seemingly dual role is a

collaborative effort, where the TL along with their staff influences each other in a collegial

environment to embrace a system of enhanced education practices, especially within the reach of

their relevant groups.

The interpretative aspect of the research allowed for an in-depth elaboration of how TLs

in the pre-K-12th-grade schools learn and develop their professionalism. It also explored various

factors that affect professional leadership skills and knowledge of TL graduates in the context of

the pre-K-12th-grade school system. The account of the impact of the preparatory teacher

leadership programs on the TLs portrays a comprehensive framework of leadership model at the

pre-K-12th-grade organizations and importantly, its implications on the practices in teacher

leadership, as well as the kind of skills and knowledge graduate TLs require to conform to the

contextual expectations. As the TL programs involve gradual development and learning process,

TLs graduating from the programs developed leadership skills and knowledge gradually both in

informal and formal ways. While the main purpose of formal training in terms of PD programs

has been recognized in this study, the prime source of TLs' professional development is found to

be experiential learning which is both within the pre-K-12th-grade school system and other

relevant contexts. However, it requires the teacher leadership graduates to reflect effectively on

their previous experiences while relating such to their existing roles in leadership, which

contributed to the spirit of collaboration and collegiality. The study findings also revealed the

preparatory TL program has had direct implications on TLs by nurturing in them strong

professional identity as highly skilled and knowledgeable classroom teachers. Although some

roles in teacher leadership might not require the program graduates to deploy their pedagogical

knowledge and skills, their distinctive identity as more professional developed classroom TLs

might accord them esteemed credibility and recognition among their collegial teachers within the

institutions.

The addition of a Fifth Wave of TL

After review the data and findings, an adaptation from The Three Waves of TL of Silva,

Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) and The Four Waves of TL, Sanocki (2013) is recommended. This

researcher recommends a new fifth wave of TL (see Figure 5)   The findings show that TL will

become fully embedded in the educational framework when it also includes TLs working with

state agencies. State agencies need TLs for initiative buy-in, recommendations, and for a better

understanding of what is needed in higher education programs to prepare teachers for these

requirements. TLs have a greater advantage of seeing through a wide lens to understand and

align government initiatives with classroom best practices. TLs can work with state agencies to

develop and align higher education programs to ensure courses meet the needs of stakeholders at all levels. Changes in educational policies may be supported and delegated out to a school by its educational leadership. Yet, it is the TLs at the school who can best offer other teachers with an understanding of why and how that change is going to be implemented.

Figure 5.

An adapted model from The Three Waves of TL of Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan 2000; and The Four Waves of TL, Sanocki, 2013; comes the fifth wave of TL, Stoddard, 2020.

First Wave: Teachers need the opportunity to reach out to other teachers.

Second Wave: All educational parties: Gov. state agencies, higher ed., districts, schools, teachers, communities, and stakeholders must have an aligned definition of roles and duties of the TL, keeping in mind that this must be flexible to the culture of the local school.

Third Wave: Change of perception among schools, especially from administrators who exhibit a need to control, a school with a negative school culture.

Fourth Wave: Transformational shift, when teacher leaders are respectfully utilized to empower, teach, and support other teachers and stakeholders within the school and community.

Fifth Wave: TL's will advise and assist state agencies with suggestions for higher ed. programs and coursework, including giving input on the state certification requirements, along with ensuring flexibility of content based on the diversity of schools.

Recommendations for TL Programs and Schools

The study offers a crucial contribution to the current knowledge body on the subject of teacher leadership development in the context of the pre-K-12th-grade school system. Moreover, the overall findings of the research present a comprehensive description of the prevailing context which provides sensitive insights applicable to a wide range of systems sharing similar scenarios of organizational leadership and management. Therefore, the study findings can be directly applied to academic leadership centers in the education system of the United State and the rest of

the world which mostly focus on training and coaching top-tier education managers and leaders while ignoring the concept of teacher leadership programs. The study findings have broadened the significance as well as the scope of teacher leadership within the context of the pre-K-12th-grade school system. Its main emphasis is; thus, that the influences, knowledge, and experiences could give meaningful directions to the academic leadership centers to broaden its range of supportive training for yearning TLs. Additionally, the findings of the study must be applied to offer reliable guidelines and motivation to the inspiring and daring TLs to allow them to learn and gain holistic knowledge about the organizational leadership practices as well as the associated constraints and how to overcome them. This approach could offer them an in-depth understanding of the roles in leadership with the pre-K-12th-grade school system context.

The findings from the study shown in Figure 6, are represented to bullet recommendations for higher educational programs and state agencies. These recommendations are intended to help higher ed. programs, program trainers, and the designers liable for the professional growth and development of TLs, through organizing and monitoring the implementation of TL programs. These suggestions highly support the PD needs of TLs and contextual realities while integrating them to the professional developed-based programs.

Figure 6.

Recommendations for change in TL higher ed. programs and state agencies.

Area	Recommendation for & Examples of Change
Higher Education	• TL Programs should work with state agencies to align coursework and desired program outcomes. • Faculty should assist, mentor, or help guide TLs through the program when needed. • Mid-term program assessment questionnaire for students in TL programs addressing relevant coursework, instructor's content knowledge, communication and guidance,.
State Agencies	• State agency changes to higher ed. programs, must also align with local school initiatives for relevancy, cultural awareness, current school and educational trends, and funding needs. • Those at the certification level must continue the dialogue about whether a portfolio-based assessment is necessary for graduates of TL higher ed. programs. Perhaps, more specifically, if task requirements should be adjusted according to the role(s) a TL holds, current trends at the local school, or specific cultural needs. These task requirements would be adjusted through the higher-ed coursework with more autonomy from the TL to fulfill the requirements based on his or her local school needs or SIP. • Funding for higher-ed faculty, administrators, and local school TLs should be allocated for trainings and creating or improving vertical alignment maps from state agency to local schools.

Due to the responses and analysis of the TLs' experiences, several recommendations for change come from this study to further the careers and graduate programs of TLs. TL programs must align coursework to the various roles TL do within their local schools. Instructors at the graduate level for TLs should make expectations for the assignments very clear. Instructors should advocate for TLs, as they too, should be leaders who intrinsically want to help leaders and schools. TL coursework should also align to that state's certification goals. State agencies and school districts should understand the economic benefits to having TLs embedded within their schools and district.

Having an enthusiastic teacher who understands his or her school culture, and who has been trained on working with adult-learners, takes the place of academic coaches, mentors, or other external trainers. Figure 7 shows the recommendations for change from TLs for their local

schools and suggestions in general. Local administrators must support TLs within their schools.

TLs are asking to take on more to assist their colleagues, students, and administration. TL

candidates should understand that a lack of a defined line, such as the more commonly known

role of a classroom teacher or administrator may cause others to question their motives or

standing. However, ideas of a TL encroaching upon authoritative boundaries should quickly

fade from their colleagues' minds. It is neither the goal or desire of a TL to be a disciplinary or

policy changer. It is the desire of the TL to assist his or her fellow teachers and administration to

do what is best for the school, students, and staff. Recommendations for the state certification

process are to first have a clear understanding of what TLs do. Secondly, those at the

certification level must begin the dialogue about whether a portfolio-based assessment is

necessary for graduates of TL higher ed. program, or whether the state is putting up another

hurdle for these self-motivated, high-achievers.

Figure 7.

Recommendations for change at local schools and for overall purposes.

Area	Recommendation for & Examples of Change
Administrators: District and Local Schools	• School districts should understand the economic benefits to having TLs embedded within their schools and district. • Local administrators must support TLs within their schools. TLs are asking to take on more to assist their colleagues, students, and administration. • A TL's primary goal is to work with staff as an equal, to support students and the goals of the school. It is not their role to be a disciplinary, to reprimand colleagues, or be preoccupied in policy.
General	• A strong necessity to make clear: It is neither the goal or desire of a TL to be a disciplinary or policy changer. It is the desire of the TL to assist his or her fellow teachers and administration to do what is best for the school, students, and staff. • The SIP should state the TL roles and duties that the admin. and TL agreed upon.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Recommendation for Alignment at All Educational Levels

Through further analysis, the underlying issue that consistently plagues teacher leadership is the 'lack of clarification'. Therefore, a solid recommendation for vertical alignment through all levels of the education system will give its members a better awareness and understanding of what TLs do. This recommendation is reinforced by the statements shared through the participants in this study, the investigators experiences as a doctoral candidate and teacher, and from the multitude of previous research and literature that has provided so much in-depth support to TLs in the field.

Teacher leadership standards and tasks required from state agencies must align with courses offered at higher ed. institutions. All parties must agree and maintain the same vision of teacher leadership to ensure that TLs remain supported and can function properly within their school. Given the diverse nature of schools within a single district, state agency requirements and program coursework must be flexible and conscientious of the various TL's needs including what role(s) the TL holds within their school.

The state's certification process should remain flexible in task submission through higher ed. courses and assignments which may allow for a more flexible approach to address current trends, instructional or curriculum needs, cultural awareness, advocacy, assisting with the school's improvement plan, administration; their colleagues; or the needs of their community. The transfer of knowledge would not be top-down, but multi-directional. This plan would promote TLs to address relevant and authentic issues at their local school while meeting the rigorous requirements of the state agency and their graduate program. This plan would make all parties aware of what defines a TL, the various roles they may take on, leadership capabilities, and the multitude of other benefits to having a TL within their school.

Limitations of the study

There are limitations to this qualitative survey study. There was a small group of participants within this study. This study specifically included one southeastern state's TL program and teachers. For future studies, a larger or national field of TLs could participate. The survey consisted of seven surveys and one interview. The data sample was small which could be deemed a complete or incomplete sampling of accurate TL experiences and perceptions.

Implications for further studies

A constructivist qualitative approach was the chosen methodology for this study. An alternative methodology such as grounded theory and case study could be deployed to help better understand and interpret the curve of learning that takes place in different phases of individuals' lives, and to acquire insights into the due processes in the development of teacher leadership knowledge, skills, and experiences. Additionally, the capability of the qualitative narrative study approach to capture vividly lived realities while presenting highly endowed descriptions of the phenomenon context is known as its one of the main applauded merits though, but this is only possible when applied successfully with appropriate tools and multi-methods.

Additionally, an interesting future study could focus on teachers who choose to assume TL roles, but not pursue a graduate degree or attend other PD to enhance leadership skills. What factors dissuade potential candidates, and what factors persuade candidates to continue in higher-education.

Since very little attention is often given to the teacher leadership higher ed program, or TLs and their experiences and views, it would be prudent to recommend future research to extend this study and use an inductive mixed-method approach. Future research should be open to a broader group of TLs, either nationally or regionally. More data could offer additional

insights on how what makes effective and relevant TL programs, in which TLs can bring the

knowledge back to their schools and authentically practice within their school's culture, to

address their needs, support their school's improvement plan.

Another potential study may investigate the opinions of administrators; state agencies;

and higher ed. institutions about how they view the role and purpose of TLs, what is helpful to

them, and what they would like to see higher ed. programs train TLs on. This suggestion ought to

gain the perspectives of families and the local community on teacher leadership as well. The

community may or may not desire someone who authentically wants to build stronger

relationships with them, and advocate for them within the school. Perhaps a suggested role for a

TL could be to provide an outlet for community members to express concerns or areas needing

change, which in turn would be brought to the attention and addressed with school and district

administrators, or this may not be a desirable outlet for some stakeholders.

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TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Appendix A

Research Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Impact of Teacher Leadership Programs on its Graduates and P-12 School Systems

Researcher's Contact Information:
> Carolynn Stoddard
> Bagwell College of Education, Doctoral Candidate
> Teacher Leadership Graduate Program
> cstoddar@students.kennesaw.edu phone 404-402-8916

Introduction

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to contribute to my research project on teacher leaders. I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please ask the me if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Description of Project

The purpose of this project is to investigate alumni perceptions of his or her graduate program in teacher leadership. I will collect data to understand the Teacher Leadership graduates' perceptions of their graduate programs, its effectiveness of preparing leaders for their schools and districts, and other ask about various aspects of the preparatory program (e.g. certification courses, key assignments, residency and capstone experiences, research methodology courses, comprehensive exams, and dissertation). Along with this, I plan on discussing the preparation for your state's certification exams assessment tasks. Participants may be asked clarification questions following data analysis.

Explanation of Procedures

Participants will be recruited through a criterion sampling design, asking the Education Department and other faculty for the email contacts of Teacher Leaders currently working in schools who may be interested in this study. An initial email of interest along with this consent will be sent out to recruit participants. Once participants agree to the consent process I will continue with the survey. I will ask whether you will be willing to do an audio-recorded semi-structured interview via phone, Skype, or in person. All things that may identify you will be replaced by pseudonyms as these surveys and interviews will all be done anonymously.

Please use form as your informed consent which needs to be signed and dated below. I must obtain this in order for you to contribute to the study. A link to an online survey will be distributed via my campus email to those who agree to participate. Interviews will be collected and stored on a password-protected laptop. Participants will also need to give their consent to the use of an audio recording for this study. Transcriptions will use pseudonyms and surveys will be conducted anonymously.

Time Required

This informed consent should take no more than 5 minutes to read and complete. The survey may take up to an hour, depending on each participant's experiences. Should we do semi-structured interviews, these interviews may be 30 minutes long, again depending on the answers and experiences of the participants who would like to add additional information or share experiences with me.

Risks and discomforts

We do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research. Any personal information will be omitted and/or with pseudonyms used.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to the participant, although participants may gain benefit from reflecting on their experiences.

Compensation

There is no monetary benefit for individuals to participate in this study.

Confidentiality

Information and data regarding interviews and online surveys or surveys will only be accessible to the Principle Investigator and Co-Investigator/ Primary Contact and my dissertation chair for this study. Identifiable information will be limited, as participants will be given a pseudonym that will be used to identify data collected through the data collection procedures. The transcription of interviews will use pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy and maintain confidentiality. Audio-files and transcriptions will be stored in password protected files on the researcher's computer.

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. You must also be currently working in a school in the state. Participants must also have obtained a post-graduate degree in Teacher Leadership, or be close to graduating, with less than 9 hours until end of program, specifically not including Educational Leadership.

Use of the Online Survey

All online surveys and data, interview (video and audio) will be stored with the primary and co-investigators for three years after the study is concluded. The online surveys will only be accessible during a short duration of time. They will no-longer be accessible after this time ends. Your IP address will not be retrieved, used, or stored for this research project.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

If you have questions

        The main researcher conducting this study is Co-investigator Dr. Raynice Jean-Sigur, Professor at the Bagwell College of Education and Head of the Teacher Leadership Department, and Carolynn Stoddard, a doctoral student at Kennesaw State University. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact rjeansig@kennesaw.edu or call at 470.578.4277. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson, Dr. Christine Ziegler at (470) 578-6407 or irb@kennesaw.edu.

        Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.

PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF THIS CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR YOUR RECORDS, OR IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PRINT CAPABILITIES, YOU MAY CONTACT THE RESEARCHER TO OBTAIN A COPY.

Thank you so much for your time,

Carolynn Stoddard

☐ I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

☐ I do not agree to participate and will be excluded from the remainder of the questions.

_____   _____
                        print name   date

_____
                        signature

Appendix B

Study 20-058: Teacher Leaders' Experiences and Perceptions from Program to Practice

Review the IRB website for information about what type of IRB review applies to your study (http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/about/review-classifications.php)

Review type:

_ **X** _Check here for a Request for Exemption

___Check here for an Expedited Review [IRB Reviewers may recommend a Full Board Review]

Status of Primary Investigator:

_ _Faculty   ___Staff   _ **X** _Student

Students as the Primary Investigator (PI) and their Faculty Advisors
Students (graduate and undergraduate) must have a faculty advisor complete the last page of this form and submit all documents from the faculty advisor's KSU email address. Students must also use their KSU email address in all IRB correspondence.

By submitting this form, you agree that you have read KSU's Federal-wide Assurance of Compliance and agree to provide for the protection of the rights and welfare of your research participants as outlined in the Assurance. You also agree to submit any significant changes in the procedures of your project to the IRB for prior approval and agree to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to subjects or others.

Title of Research

Teacher Leaders' Experiences and Perceptions from Program to Practice

Start Date is date of IRB approval   *Proposed start date*: _8/31/2019___

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

*The official start date for research is the date the IRB approval letter is issued. Research activities may not begin prior to final IRB approval. Studies should be submitted well in advance of the proposed start date to allow for processing, review, and approval. If you have not received a letter from the IRB in 10 business days of submission, please call or email requesting status update.

Is your research being funded in any way? ___Yes*   _**X**_ No
*Where is the funding coming from? [Name of Federal Agency/Foundation/Department]

Primary Investigator

Name:

Carolynn Stoddard

Department:

Teacher Leadership Ed.D. candidate

Telephone: Email:

404-402-8916	cstoddar@students.kennesaw.edu

FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS AS THE PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR, GO TO THE LAST PAGE OF THE APPLICATION FORM TO ENTER REQUIRED FACULTY ADVISOR INFORMATION.

Co-Investigator(s) who are faculty, staff, or students at KSU

Co-Investigator(s) who are NOT employees or students at KSU: Please submit your human participants training certificate with application materials.

Name: Email: Home Institution:
Name: Email: Home Institution:
Additional Names (include email and home institution):

ALL researchers listed on this application MUST have completed CITI training BEFORE an IRB Approval will be provided.

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Visit http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/citi-training.php for additional information about CITI training, how to choose the right course, and how to create a profile. ALL KSU faculty/staff/students MUST use their KSU provided email address on all correspondence.
NOTE: It is each researcher's responsibility to ensure that the CITI Certificate does not expire during the course of the approved study. Failure to maintain a current certificate will invalidate your approval. Please use your KSU email address on your CITI profile and make sure your profile name matches the one provided above.

Does your research involve minors? ___Yes   _ **X** _No
See item number 5 below for parental consent and minor assent information. See http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php for forms and information.

Will this research involve COLLABORATION with ANOTHER INSTITUTION?

___Yes   _ **X** __No, go to question 1

If yes, provide the name of the Institution _____

Has the other Institution conducted an IRB review of the study?

___No   ___Yes – Send that review with this approval form to the KSU IRB.

1. **Prior Research**

Have you submitted research on this topic to the KSU IRB previously? ___Yes* _ **X** _ No

*If yes, list the date, title, name of investigator, and study number:

See http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/application-tips.php for detailed explanations of questions 2-8. Provide complete sentences with sufficient information for an IRB review.

2. **Description of Research**
   a. Purpose of and anticipated findings for this study:

   > The purpose of this dissertation research is to examine the impact of TL graduate programs as told through the experiences of current teacher leaders and to bridge the knowledge gap by understanding how teacher leaders feel they are affecting school achievement. This research will investigate: What impact do teacher leadership programs have on teacher leaders?

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

> In what capacity are graduates utilizing the program within their careers?
> What impact do TL graduates feel they are having at their schools?
> The findings will be printed in this dissertation research to add to the literature on teacher leadership, school initiatives, effective school practices, and effective preparatory graduate programs as seen through experiences and perceptions of current teacher leaders.

b. Nature of data to be collected (interview (includes focus groups), online or hardcopy survey, observations, experimental procedures, etc.):

> - Open-ended questionnaire of 18 questions done online from a document at participant's pace.
> - Any documents the participants would like to share based on PD, feedback, handouts they have created, etc.
> - Semi-structured interviews from 3-4 participants to further elaborate or clarify their questionnaire responses.

c. Data collection procedures: (include information on how consent will be obtained, how links will be provided, where interviews will be conducted, audio or video taping, etc.). Note: student email addresses are FERPA protected. Student email addresses, grades, or work cannot be collected without student consent and IRB approval.

> A written informed consent form will be obtained from all participants. A link to an online questionnaire document will be distributed via my campus email to the personal emails of current teacher leaders working in public and private pre-K-12th grade schools in the Southeast of the United States. Interviews will be conducted by phone, recorded, and transcribed. These will be stored on a password-protected laptop, and deleted after the dissertation research is completed. Transcriptions will use pseudonyms and surveys will be conducted anonymously.

d. Survey instruments to be used (pre-/post-tests, interview and focus group questionnaires, online surveys, standardized assessments etc.). Attach all survey instruments with your application document):

> Consent Form, Questionnaire, and Interview guide (please see attached)

e. Method of selection/recruitment of participants:
   Refer to the KSU Mass Email policy on the use emails to faculty/staff. For student recruitment via email, please also follow these mandatory instructions.   ALL recruitment materials (flyers, emails, posters, etc.) MUST include your IRB Approval Study # and a statement that your study has been reviewed and approved by KSU's IRB.

> Through criterion sampling, the participants will be selected. The criterion for this research are:
> - Post-graduate, or near completion graduates
> - In-service teacher leaders.
> - Currently working as a teacher/TL in a public or private pre-K-12th grade school.
> - Graduate degree from accredited traditional institution (M.Ed, Ed. S, Ed.D, Ph.D), or near completion of 9 hours or less.
> - Must be an adult.
> - Contacting TLProg. Coordinators within the state to forward letter of interest.

f. Participant age range: _ 22 to 90 years Number: _8-10 participants ___

Sex: __Males   __ Females or   **X** Both

g. Incentives, follow-ups, compensation to be used: (e.g., Gift cards, course credit, etc.). Please visit HERE on our website for guidelines on participant incentive payments.

> There is no monetary benefit for individuals to participate in this study.

3. Risks

Describe in detail any psychological, social, legal, economic, or physical risk that might occur to participants. *Note that all research may entail some level of risk, though perhaps minimal.* According to the federal regulations at §46.102(i), *minimal risk* means that the probability **and** magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

 X There is minimal risk (if selected, must be reflected within consent documents)

__ There is more than minimal risk (requires full explanation below and in consent documents)

Anticipated risks include (if selected, specific potential risks must be incorporated into the consent documents):

> There will be minimal to no risk for participants. Participation in the study involves sharing of personal experiences, which are shared at the discretion of the participant.

If more than minimal risk is anticipated, describe your method for handling risk.

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4. Benefits

Federal Guidelines and University policy require that risks from participation be outweighed by potential benefits to participants and/or humankind in general.

a. Identify potential benefits to participants resulting from this research (It is possible that there are no direct benefits or *possible* specific benefits, either must be reflected in the consent documents):

> There are no direct benefits to the participant, although participants may gain benefit from reflecting on their experiences.

b. Identify benefits to humankind in general resulting from this research. While there may be no potential benefits to participants there must be some benefit to humankind in order to receive IRB approval. Please include these benefits in the consent documents:

> This study will contribute understanding about the effectiveness of Teacher Leadership programs. Through our understanding of the participants' perceptions, we can continue to create and offer the highest quality Teacher Leadership

5. Informed Consent

All studies of human participants must include informed consent (see IRB approved [templates]). Consent may require a signature or may simply require that participants be informed. Minor participants must receive an assent form in conjunction with parental consent (see IRB approved [templates]). If deception is necessary, please justify and describe, and submit debriefing procedures.

What is the consent process to be followed in this study? Submit your consent form(s) with the application as a separate document(s).

> I will send out a letter of research purpose and an online survey consent form to participants. Please see attached [consent form].

6. Online Surveys

Will you use an online survey to obtain data from human participants in this study?
Check all that apply.

__ No. If no, skip to Question 7 below.

X Yes, I will use an online survey to obtain data in this study. If yes:

a. How will **online data** be collected and handled? Select one and add the chosen statement to your consent document.

___ Data collected online will be handled in an anonymous manner and Internet Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program.

_**X**_ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner (identifiers will be used), but Internet Protocol addresses **WILL NOT** be collected by the survey program.

___ Data collected online will be handled in a confidential manner and Internet Protocol addresses **WILL** be collected by the survey program.

b. Include an "I agree to participate" **and** an "I do not agree to participate" answer at the bottom of your consent document. Program the "I do not agree to participate" statement to exclude the participant from answering the remainder of the survey questions (this is accomplished through "question logic" in Survey Monkey or "skip logic" in Qualtrics).

Ensure that the online consent document is the first page the participant sees after clicking on the link to your online survey.

Although you may construct your own consent document, see the IRB approved Online Survey Cover Letter template (http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/consent-templates.php), which contains all of the required **elements of informed consent** that must be addressed within any online consent document.

7. Vulnerable Participants

Will minors or other vulnerable participants (e.g., prisoners, pregnant women, those with intellectual disabilities) be included in this research?

___Yes. Outline procedures to be used in obtaining the agreement (parental consent, assent or guardian consent) for vulnerable participants. Describe plans for obtaining consent of the parent, guardian, or authorized representative of these participants. For research conducted within the researcher's own classroom, describe plans for having someone other than the researcher obtain consent/assent so as to reduce the perception of coercion.

_**X**_ No. All studies excluding minors as participants should include language within the consent document stating that only participants aged 18 and over may participate in the study.

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8. Future Risks

How are participants protected from the potentially harmful future use of the data collected in this research?

a. Describe measures planned to ensure anonymity or confidentiality. Studies can only be considered completely anonymous if no identifying information is collected; therefore, a cover letter must be used in place of a signed consent form.

> Information and data regarding interviews and online surveys or questionnaires will only be accessible to the Principle Investigator for the study. Identifiable information will be eliminated as participants will be given a pseudonym that will be used to identify data collected through the data collection procedures. The transcription of interviews will use pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy and maintain confidentiality. Audio-files and transcriptions will be stored in password-protected files on the researcher's computer and deleted after three years of the completion of the dissertation research.
> I will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone without the participant's written consent unless required by law. Participants' involvement in the study is voluntary, and they may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

b. Describe methods for storing data while study is underway. Personal laptops are not considered secure.

> All information of the study will be stored electronically and password protected.

c. List dates and plans for storing and/or destroying data and media once study is completed. Please note that all final records relating to conducted research, including signed consent documents, must be retained for at least three years following completion of the research and must be accessible for inspection by authorized representatives as needed.

> The online questionnaire and interview (will be stored with the primary investigator for three years after the study is concluded. The online surveys will only be accessible during a short duration of time. They will no-longer be accessible after this time ends.

d. If digital audio, video, or other electronic data are to be used, when will they be destroyed?

> Digital files will be used until the end of the study and reporting of the study. Files will be available through the primary investigator for up to three years after the study is concluded. The files will be destroyed after the three years are completed.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

9. Illegal Activities

Will collected data relate to any illegal activities? __Yes* _**X**_ No
This includes asking about illegal activities from participants or surveys containing any
reference to illegal activities (e.g., questions requesting information about witnessing illegal
behaviors that others have engaged in, minors drinking or using drugs, or any illegal drug use or
violence of any nature that would result in legal action).

*If yes, please explain.

Is my Study Ready for Review?
Every research protocol, consent document, and survey instrument approved by the IRB is
designated as an official institutional document; therefore, study documents must be as
complete as possible. Research proposals containing spelling or grammatical errors, missing
required elements of informed consent (within consent or assent documents), not addressing
all questions within this form, or missing required documents will be classified as incomplete.
**All studies classified as incomplete may be administratively rejected and returned to the
researcher and/or faculty advisor without further processing.**
If you are a non-KSU researcher wishing to recruit participants from the KSU campus, please
follow these instructions: http://research.kennesaw.edu/irb/about/external-international-
research.php
**Student researchers make sure that your faculty advisor completes the following page and
sends all study related material from their KSU email address to** irb@kennesaw.edu**. Failure
to follow this procedure will result in a significant delay in the approval process.**
**RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS AS PRIMARY
INVESTIGATORS**
All undergraduate and graduate students who will be acting as the Primary Investigator must be
under the direct supervision of a faculty advisor. The faculty advisor must review the IRB
application materials and agrees to supervise the student's proposed human subject research
project by completion and submission of this routing sheet.

All application materials must be submitted by the faculty advisor from their KSU email address
to irb@kennesaw.edu. Students may not submit their materials to the IRB for the first review;
however, subsequent revisions can be sent directly to irb@kennesaw.edu with a cc to your
advisor and MUST come from your KSU provided email account.

FOR RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY STUDENTS OR NON-FACULTY STAFF. This study, if approved,
will be under the direct supervision of the following faculty advisor who is a member of the KSU
faculty:

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Faculty Advisor

Name:

Dr. Raynice Jean-Sigur,

Department:

Bagwell College of Education

Email:	Phone:
rjeansig@kennesaw.edu	470-578-4475

By checking the items below and submitting all materials from your KSU email, the faculty advisor for this project attests the following:

_X__I have personally reviewed each of my student's IRB application documents (approval request, exemption request, informed consent documents, child assent documents, survey instruments, etc.) for completeness, and all documents pertaining to the conduct of this study are enclosed (consents, assents, questionnaires, surveys, assessments, etc.)

_X__ I have completed the Social/Behavioral Research course (Biomedical version only for medical/biological human studies) CITI training course in the ethics of human subject research within the past three years as have all researchers named within this application.

_X__I approve this research and agree to supervise the student(s) as the study is conducted.

Date: ___8.26.2019_____

Appendix C

Teacher Leader Survey

- Please take your time in answering each question thoroughly and honestly.
- Your responses will be completely anonymous. As I receive the completed surveys, a pseudonym will be assigned for organization and data analysis purposes. Pseudonyms will also be used for any names you may give.
- If you would prefer to answer these questions via a phone interview, please let me know.
- If I may contact you to follow-up about the experiences you've shared, please leave your contact information.

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and insights.

If you get stuck, several questions have a "Prompt" button you can press for additional ideas in order for you to recollect your experiences (shown here as a, b, c…)

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
   a) Where?
   b) For how long? Cohort, at own pace?
   c) Coursework
   d) Capstone Project
   e) Dissertation process
   f) Colleagues
   g) Experience when bringing your grad program into your school.
   h) Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program.

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?
   a) What do you currently teach?
   b) What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more?

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your program that you've used in your career?

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for?

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you.

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader?

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated?

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program.

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve?

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?
    a. Stay in the classroom
    b. Train or coach other teachers
    c. Change to a central office position
    d. Go into administration
    e. Facilitate PD

11. What formal title do you have?

12. What roles do you serve in your school?
    a) Classroom or Leadership? What do you do within your school and community?
       i. Would you like more opportunities?
       ii. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR
          iii. How do you feel about requesting fewer leadership roles?

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader.

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your graduate program or in your current position?

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?
    a. They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc.
    b. Sees you as admin now
    c. How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.?
    d. Do you facilitate PD or want to?

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both?

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change?

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position?

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader?

Appendix D

Interview Question Guide (follow-up to survey)

Prompts:

I found this really interesting, can you talk more about …

What did you expect was going to happen after you got your teacher leadership degree?

Please describe what …. felt like to you.

Please elaborate on this experience more.

Who have been the biggest supporters of yours?

What made you decide to go into TL?

What are your thoughts on finishing this degree?

Are there other programs you may be interested in?

Appendix E

Rationale for Survey Inquiries

Research Questions	Survey Questions	Rationale

What impact has the teacher leadership program had on the teacher leaders?	1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
	  a. Where?
	  b. For how long? Cohort, at own pace?
	  c. Coursework
	  d. Capstone Project
	  e. Dissertation process
	  f. Colleagues
	  g. Experience when bringing your grad program into your school.
	  h. Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program.
	
	2. What ways are you using your program currently in your school?
	
	  a. What do you currently teach?
	  b. What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more?
	
	3. What has been some of the most useful parts of your program that you've used in your career?
	
	4. What did you hope your TL graduate program would have better prepared you for?
	
	5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you.
		To understand and have participants analyze their graduate programs.
		
		To learn of the scope of the coursework the participants completed.
		
		To have the participant speak of the deeper meanings behind his/her motivation to want a higher degree in teacher leadership.
		
		To understand how the participant chose to depict an experience. Why did this experience come to mind before others?
		
		To learn of possible common themes, processes, or what has been most useful or valuable to the teacher leader, along with what was the least valuable part of their program.
		
		To learn how teacher leaders learned to balance their career, time, family, finances, obligations, graduate work, and more all at the same time.
		
		To learn whether programs are adequately preparing graduates for state certifications.

In what capacity are teacher leaders utilizing their graduate programs within their careers?	6. How did you first start to imbed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader?
	
	7. How have your experiences changed since you graduated?
	
	8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program.
	
	9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration?
	
	10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?
	
	   a. Stay in the classroom
	   b. Train or coach other teachers
	   c. Change to a central office position
	   d. Go into administration
	   e. Facilitate PD
	   f. Advocate for others
	   g. Other, please specify
		To understand how well received teacher leaders are within his or her school's culture.
		
		To understand what their processes and steps are; what possible goals the participants may have.
		
		To understand the long-term goals of these leaders.
		
		To learn how the principal uses teacher leaders within his or her school.
		
		To learn whether the teacher leader felt confident in him or herself to run a professional development course, school incentive program, or other ways in which they held a leadership role.

What impact do TL feel they are having at their schools?	11. What formal title do you have?
	
	12. What roles do you serve in your school?
	   a. Classroom or Leadership? What do you do within your school and community?
	   b. Would you like more opportunities?
	     i. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR
	     ii. How do you feel about requesting less leadership roles?
	13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader.
		To understand what changes have occurred within their careers.
		
		To understand how the participants, feel the faculty and staff view them.
		
		To learn how principals and administration are using teacher leaders with their schools. Has this hindered their experience or has it ignited more passion in their careers?

| | 14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your graduate program or in your current position?

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?
   a. They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc.
   b. Sees you as admin now
   c. How does your admin view you, use your time, etc.?
   d. Do you facilitate PD or want to?

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both?

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change?

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position?

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader? | Is there a continued passion to keep learning or try something new?

Are these teacher leaders' content in their niche, or are some people been more explorative than others when it comes to being a teacher leader.

To understand what their TL duties are, if any, and what they would like them to be.

To understand whether expectations are the same from post-graduates, administration, state certification tests, district officials, etc.

To understand how the role of teacher leader changes a person or his or her views about teaching. |

Appendix F

Participant Responses

Participant 1 Survey

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.

   a. Where? _____
   b. For how long? Cohort, at own pace? Cohort Model, but I took a two-year break between the two years of coursework because of my spouse's job relocation and starting a new job myself.
   c. Coursework Teacher Leadership, master's degree
   d. Capstone Project Portfolio
   e. Dissertation process N/A
   f. Colleagues While I worked cooperatively with others, I did develop strong
       a. relationships with colleagues due to the online nature of the program, and my
       b. mid-program hiatus.
   g. Experience when bringing your grad program into your school. My supervisors
       a. were extremely supportive as I implemented projects from my grad program with
       b. my peers at school. I took on increased responsibility at work.
   h. Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program.

   Balance was very difficult for me during this degree program, and honestly may prevent me from pursuing a specialist or doctoral degree. Between work, family, and church (my husband is a pastor, so we are very involved), grad school was a low priority for me, but I wanted to be able to invest more time and energy to get the most out of the program. This caused me to be bitter and resentful about my coursework, and often brought me to tears.

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?

   a) What do you currently teach? I teach 5th grade math
   b) What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or
       a. district-wide or more? I lead our small group (5) of 5th grade math teachers. I frequently attend PL, and redeliver to my colleagues. We have PL for content, assessment, and behavior management with frequency.

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your TL program that you've used in your career? Understanding how different working with adults is, than children has been helpful for me. I am better able to build relationships with colleagues and lead them as a peer, whereas before, I felt more need for authority, in order to lead.

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for and why? I wish my program had better prepared me for the state certification, and while they are making strides

forward in this for future cohorts, I do not feel adequately prepared. My colleagues taking classes through ____ are much better prepared.

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you.

>   a. Not complete yet. Plans to complete by this Nov.

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader? My skillset and personality allowed me to become a teacher leader. Conversations with administration allowed me to take on more formal roles.

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated?

No. During the program, I picked up more responsibility, and that has stayed the same since graduation.

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program. I am a more compassionate leader of my peers. I realized that relationships matter in leadership, and it doesn't matter how good I am, and what I know, unless I can effectively communicate those things with love and grace.

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve? I'm respected by my school community. My colleagues see me as trustworthy and reliable. I'm seen as someone who is creative, good with data, helpful to others, and strong in the classroom.

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree? For now, I'd like to continue classroom teaching. In the future, I can see myself working for RESA and providing PL and support to a variety of teachers.

>   a. Stay in the classroom
>   b. Train or coach other teachers
>   c. Change to a central office position
>   d. Go into administration
>   e. Facilitate PD
>   f. Advocate for others
>   g. Other, please specify

11. What formal title do you have?

>   I do not have a formal title.

12. What roles do you serve in your school?

>   a) Classroom, Leadership, Other (please specify)? What do you do within your school and community? Classroom teacher, grade level leadership

     a. What opportunities would you like offered to you? <mark>Continued opportunities for PL and redelivery to my peers.</mark>

     b. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR

b) <mark>I think it depends on the supervisor. I currently have a great rapport with my supervisors, and talking with them is honest and productive communication, so it is easy to ask for leadership roles. They appreciate me taking on more weight.</mark>

c) How do you feel about requesting fewer leadership roles?

     <mark>I know how to advocate for myself and my family, and I am willing to accede leadership roles when needed, My supervisors are supportive.</mark>

d) If you were to support curriculum or a school initiative that you didn't agree with, how would you go about handling this?

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader?
<mark>The greatest challenge is working with other educators who don't want to learn and grow, who are happy with the status quo, and are just waiting for retirement. Additionally, teachers who don't think they need to grow are difficult to work with.</mark>

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your TL graduate program or in your current position? <mark>My instructors were very supportive, as were my school, and my family. I was discouraged by the work load, particularly in my "internship" when working on my portfolio. In particular, because that portfolio did not align with the state certification.</mark>

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?
     a. They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc. <mark>Comfortable</mark>
     b. Sees you as admin now <mark>Not at all, but they know I will advocate for them to admin</mark>
     c. How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? <mark>My admins appreciate all my efforts</mark>
     d. Do you facilitate PD or want to? <mark>Yes- I do</mark>
     e. Other (please specify)

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both? I feel very successful.

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change? <mark>More responsibility can be overwhelming at first, but it becomes routine, and it definotley worthwhile.</mark>

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position? <mark>Minimally</mark>

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader? <mark>N/A</mark>

Optional Demographics: Female, 12 years, Public School, Rural, 5th Grade Math, Caucasian, Non-Hispanic, Masters Degree in Teacher Leadership.

Participant 2 Survey

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
    a. Where? _____
    b. For how long? Cohort, at own pace? Online program, 2 ½ years of coursework (12 courses) and 1-year dissertation minimum (9 credits minimum)
    c. Coursework – Was challenging and overwhelming to navigate because of new concepts on more or less a self-taught environment. Although professor was available for some video conferencing, emails, and/or phone calls at times, the students' diverse experiences made it hard to relate to in other than general terms.
    d. Capstone Project – Beginning of Project was more self-guided to complete
    e. Dissertation process – Process is self-taught and self-guidance to complete overall. Although the scheduling is curbed to student, a specific process or plan was not laid out at the beginning, so as a student working and answering questions, it is hard to prepare in many ways for the discussion that occurs.
    f. Colleagues – Were the saving grace for all of the courses I took at ___. If I had not had my colleagues to discuss the information and help plan how to complete assignments, it would have been twice as difficult and frustrating. I would not have been able to go through the program without my colleagues' help and support.
    g. Experience when bringing your grad program into your school. – Difficult. Although most colleagues were willing to help, the time needed was far less than would be given on a regular basis.
    h. Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program. – Very difficult. My husband has had to shoulder the majority of the child and home responsibilities during the semester weeks that I have been enrolled. I would not have been able to be so close with completing this program if I had home and child responsibilities. I have had to curtail social activities/excursions with family and friends, hobbies, leisure activities, and some family activities just to ensure that I could complete the coursework and work full-time. In my

opinion, the TL program is conducive for working professionals to take two three-
credit classes each semester.

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?

    a. What do you currently teach? High School/ Co-Teaching

    b. What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or
       district-wide or more? Weekly PLC for Science Department.

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your TL program that you've used in
   your career?

    a. Useful Parts - how to prioritize, organize, write, and discuss topics, analyze data
       and other reports to narrow down to the pertinent information I am looking for to
       help answer questions or help find sources to resolve issues.

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for and why?

    a. I hoped the TL program would allow me to become more proficient in the
       classroom and more confident with how to find and integrate material, strategies,
       and techniques to become a more well-rounded teacher.

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you.

    a. I have not taken it yet. I believe I have one year from my graduation to take it and
       I have not found the time. Additionally, I am reluctant to pay for another
       certification that my district has expressed that they do not consider valuable
       unless the position I am in is in a leadership role they approve.

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher
   leader?

    a. I had to become a team leader. These positions are appointed by the principal.

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated?

    a. While I am still working on my doctorate (graduating Summer 2020), I feel that
       my experiences have changed greatly already. I am very confident in what I
       suggest and discuss with other co-workers.

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program.

    a. I believe that my teaching has become more meaningful and more in-depth how I implement the activities, strategies, and techniques used. This is an effort to integrate and/or layer the curriculum to provide the maximum amount of learning possible.

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve?

    a. I believe my colleagues admire my drive and determination to complete my doctorate. I believe my administration is irritated by me showing any signs of knowledge of their school processes and outcomes. I believe the families and communities I serve are confident with the choices I provide or decisions I help make in conjunction with them. I believe they realize that my decisions are in the best interest of their child.

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?

Stay in the classroom
Train or coach other teachers
Change to a central office position
Go into administration
Facilitate PD
Advocate for others
Other, please specify:
I am not really sure what I will do with my leadership degree. I enjoy the classroom; however, I do think I would like a change in the near future. All of the choices given sound interesting, however, I have not settled on any one specific use for my leadership degree at this time.

11. What formal title do you have? Currently - Sp. Ed. Co-Teacher, High School – until recently, MI/MO Sp. Ed. Teacher, Jr. High School, Grade 7-8

12. What roles do you serve in your school?

    a) Classroom, Leadership, Other (please specify)? What do you do within your school and community? Co-Teacher (I was just transferred over in October 2019), so I do not do anything within my school or community at this time.

    b) What opportunities would you like offered to you? Unsure at this time. I have never worked in a high school before, so I am not sure what opportunities are available.

    c) How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR

d) How do you feel about requesting fewer leadership roles? I would accept a more leadership role if offered and given the opportunity

e) If you were to support curriculum or a school initiative that you didn't agree with, how would you go about handling this? Well, interestingly, that is how I got transferred to the high school. I inquired (though an email) regarding an initiative being implemented into a Sp. Ed. Self-contained room. No one contacted parents, provided a written or verbal curriculum to implement this new program, or wanted to discuss how the program would improve the program already in place. No one from administration responded to my requests for more information or examples of how to integrate the program. I was transferred within 3 weeks of the program beginning.

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader?

a. Administration can oftentimes feel threatened and believe you are not supporting their programs and overall vision for the school. They can seek retribution and have you transferred. I am very happy about the transfer overall and besides the fact that I was content with working at the Jr. High in my previous position. However, the transfer negates the leadership points in the coursework that working together collectively to align curriculum and actions will improve teachers, students, and school overall.

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your TL graduate program or in your current position?

a. Encouraging – that I feel I better understand the role of a teacher leader and how that can strengthen a classroom.
b. Discouraging – That I had to spend more time learning on my own and did not feel the online classes prepared me for the real-world applications of being a teacher leader. In short, coursework did not feel relevant at all. Coursework gave very general overview of what is actually done in schools.

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?

a) They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc. – Seems uneasy about you going to school to complete my doctorate. I have gotten several negative comments regarding just going to school to be in charge. This is actually quite the opposite. This degree was a personal goal and was never my intention of being a part of administration.

b) Sees you as admin now – No

c) How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? As an adversary

       d) Do you facilitate PD or want to? Sure, if asked

       e) Other (please specify)

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both?

    a. I am at a new school and I believe I am doing fine for beginning at a school and job that I am unfamiliar with. As a teacher, I need to continue to work on the new content and curriculum. However, although they do acknowledge I have experience and they seem to respect that, I do not think I am looked upon as a teacher leader.

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change?

    a. By my transfer of schools, I would say that I inquired about the alignment, resources, and curriculum too much. I was only trying to ensure that I as the classroom teacher and teacher leader were implementing programs and supportive curriculum that would ensure that the I and the school were adhering to the curriculum guidelines and Special Education guidelines and parameters.

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position?

    a. I have gained more knowledge regarding the overall educational system. It is both interesting and unsettling. In my opinion, the educational system is more fragmented than I originally thought. With a new perspective also come new burdens of trying to work harder to resolve more of the problems that I see. I have become more vocal in that I question more and have a broader picture of the educational system and what it takes as a teacher, teacher leader, and collectively as a school, district, and nation to try to improve.

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader?

    a. Although I have enjoyed learning many aspects of this program (not all), I am not sure if I would select the TL program again. I wanted to go to back to school for my doctorate as a personal goal and to possibly propel my career if I ever felt I wanted to leave the classroom at any point. I only really wanted to enhance my classroom teaching and co-workers and the school. As a Special Education teacher, I truly believe that most of the teachers and many of administrators (current and previous) that I have ever interacted with do not think that as a Special Education teacher that I have anything to offer as a teacher, much less a teacher leader. I have received numerous sighs, eye rolls, and "oh's" from others when they learn what my doctoral degree will be in once it is complete. I even had a teacher tell me that maybe I could get an add-on in Educational Leadership to actually do something with my degree.

b. The degree will fulfill my desire for knowledge of the educational system (somewhat) and the personal goal I set. However, I do not think it will propel my career in any way at this point. I have already been told by my district that they will not pay for my certification upgrade to a T-7, because they do not consider even a doctoral degree in Teacher Leadership as any enhancement with my teaching skills in the classroom unless I was selected for an actual leadership position such as Lead Teacher, etc. This whole experience has made me feel slightly jaded and really question why the degree is even offered by an accredited institution if my school district will not recognize an accredited degree. To pour salt into my open wounds, the state mandates that I have one year until the time I graduate to complete and pass a portfolio to become certified to be a Teacher Leader that I just spent almost four years devoted to from a state accredited institution. My district explained they do not require this certification for me to be selected as an Academic Coach. The only value that I can see with the a TL degree presently is knowing that with perseverance, determination, intrinsic motivation, help from peers in the virtual classroom, and support from my family that I can accomplish my goal that I set and do anything I set my mind to do.

Optional Demographics

Gender: ___F____   Years Teaching __10_____ Private School_____ Public School ____10____

Rural, Urban, or Suburban school setting, Other (Specify)_Urban 1 year, Suburban 4 years, Rural 5 years

Grade/Age/or Content Area _Alternative Middle School self-contained psychoeducational grades 5-8 – 4 years, _Elementary MI/MO Self-Contained grades 3-5 1 year, Middle School MI/MO Self-Contained grades 6-8 5 years, High School Co-Teacher 1 year _____

Your Race___WH_____ & Ethnicity __White Non-Hispanic_____

Participant 3 Survey

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.

> a) Where? _____
>
> b) For how long? Cohort, at own pace?
>
> c) Coursework
>
> d) Capstone Project Portfolio
>
> e) Dissertation process
>
> f) Colleagues Cohort but we didn't do a lot of collaborative projects.
>
> g) Experience when bringing your grad program into your school.
>
> h) Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program.
>   It was hard. I had to manage my time as well as I could.

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?

> a) What do you currently teach? 6th
>
> b) What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more? I assist with PD if asked. I'm team lead too.

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your TL program that you've used in your career? Working with my colleagues has helped. It has also helped me reach out to other departments and collaborate with them. I don't feel as isolated in my grade as I used to.

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for and why? I was hoping this program would help me become more of a mentor or someone who could do more peer observations and help from there. I haven't had as many opportunities to do that yet as I would have liked to, due to time.

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you. I'm still getting all of my state certification together. It's extremely time consuming and I don't feel as prepared for

all these tasks through my program. There is a lot of extra work for the state cert. that I did not know I was going to need to do. So, I am taking extra time to get all my work together and do more PD before I submit everything.

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader? I've always been pretty outgoing at my school. I'll help or volunteer when I can. My child goes here, so thankfully it's been easier time wise to manage that. My colleagues know they can come to me to talk and discuss anything from school work to students to administration.

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated? I'm still a pretty new graduate, but I feel like I'm at a standstill. I feel like I've been prepped and prepared, but it's like they don't know how to utilize me or put me somewhere. I'm hoping that will change in time because I've requested to do more observations and mentoring in the future.

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program. The other teachers would come to me informally, now I feel like they come to me more formally. The role hasn't changed, but it just feels a little more formal than before.

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve? I get along with pretty much everyone on the staff. My admin has known me for a while now. They are willing to work with me and use me more. So we are going to think of a plan for this for next year. But it is just hard to balance where they could put me, where they may want someone who is more of an AP, and a disciplinarian.

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?
       a. Stay in the classroom
       b. Train or coach other teachers
       c. Change to a central office position
       d. Go into administration
       e. Facilitate PD

        f. Advocate for others

        g. Other, please specify

11. What formal title do you have? Classroom teacher.

12. What roles do you serve in your school?

      a. Classroom, Leadership, Other (please specify)? What do you do within your school and community? I'm team lead for 6th grade.

      iii. What opportunities would you like offered to you? I'd like to mentor more.

      iv. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR

        v.   How do you feel about requesting fewer leadership roles?

        vi.   If you were to support curriculum or a school initiative that you didn't agree with, how would you go about handling this? I would get feedback from my colleagues and see what their opinions were, and try to find a middle ground solution.

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader? I haven't found many challenges. I think it's just a matter of being that in between, teacher and administrator. It's hard to not be able to be the AP and have more policy behind you, and manage time in the classroom and do all of your own work.

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your TL graduate program or in your current position? Graduate school took up so much time and costs a lot of money. There is a lot of sacrifices with continuing ed. But we signed up for it, so now it's a matter of dealing with the state certification.

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?

      a. They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc.

      b. Sees you as admin now Not really, but there is more of a formal feeling, when everyone used to just stop by and vent or talk about things around the school more.

      c. How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? We're still figuring this out. They're open to using me for whatever ways we are all comfortable doing that.

      d. Do you facilitate PD or want to? I might in the future. I also think I might be starting to facilitate and manage the afterschool tutoring groups.

      e. Other (please specify)

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both? I feel I am doing okay. I don't feel I'm doing as much as I was thinking, but at the same time, I am still teaching 6th graders and managing still being a teacher too.

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change? It hasn't changed my position.

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position? After graduating, the time school took up is nice to have, although I am still really busy. The state certification has taken up a lot more time than I ever expected too. I wish I was more prepared for all of this. And there is so much writing too that goes along with the tasks.

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader? I think it's like walking that middle line. There is teacher and there is admin. So, where someone fits in, in between those two roles is something that my administration and I are still working on. I think we can start with tasks that I could take over for them, like peer mentoring, helping with new staff members, managing tutoring, etc. and maybe it'll grow from there.

Participant 4 Survey

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
   a. Where? _____
   b. For how long? Cohort, at own pace? 2 years, the other teachers in my district who started at the same time had all the same classes with me.
   c. Coursework The coursework was set up as modules with discussion posts and weekly papers or quizzes. It was very fast paced in my opinion and the courses moved very swiftly and smoothly. I could work at my own pace during the week but there were weekly deadlines to be met.
   d. Capstone Project There was not a capstone project.
   e. Dissertation process
   f. Colleagues Most of my colleagues were classroom teachers looking to earn a master's degree or on their way to pursuing the Ed. Leadership degree which I may eventually do but for now I am "schooled out".
   g. Experience when bringing your grad program into your school. My administration was very supportive in allowing me to take on some leadership roles within the school to fulfill some of the requirements of the program such as leading some professional development for the staff and conducting parent nights. My principal tagged me for several roles that would help me to exercise some leadership at the district level as well.
   h. Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program.
      i. I was able to balance my career as I was in an office setting and not the classroom during the two years I went through the program. I was still coaching Cross Country in the Fall and Tennis in the Spring and somehow, I managed to get my coursework finished each week. I might have let some of the laundry pile up from time to time or not have made as many meals for my family of 6 during those two years but they survived. I don't think I could have managed as well if I had been in the classroom with lesson planning and grading demanding some of my time as well. I was stretched thin, but I kept the end in sight. I've never felt more relieved

> or accomplished than when I graduated. I felt even more relief when I submitted by portfolio to the state certification and later received my passing score.

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?

    a. What do you currently teach? I am currently in a position created by the superintendent in each high school in our district. It is called Teacher on Assignment and the principal can use the position and person in any way they deem necessary to increase the school's score. I am sort of a graduation coach working with at-risk students. Being a Spanish teacher, I work with the Hispanic population in our school translating for parent meetings and making contact with parents for teachers. I also oversee the RTI/MTSS (Response to Intervention/ Multi-Tiered System of Supports) program in our school as well as manage all of the students on 504 plans. I'm sort of a jack of all trades, master of none, except speaking Spanish, that I can do well.

    b. What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more? Currently I'm participating in a book study with the administration and department chairs on leadership. I'm also going through MTSS training with the state coach for our district.

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your TL program that you've used in your career? One of the most useful courses I took was on RTI. I've been better able to instruct teachers on how to determine a baseline, set a goal and select an appropriate intervention for use with their students. I feel confident answering questions about what data to collect and how to determine if an intervention is working or not.

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for and why? I went into the TL program because another colleague had already done all the research and I just needed to get a master's degree. I figured if I did eventually decide to go into administration, it would be a good steppingstone. I had no expectations, but I really felt my eyes were opened to

the importance of teaching reading and sound instructional practices. My coursework reinforced for me some things I had always placed an importance on in my own instruction as well as gave me some new perspectives. I don't think there is anything I hoped it would better prepare me for, I went in with an open mind and tried to get the most out of it that I could.

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you. The state certification process was something that caused me anxiety from sunup to sun down every day until I completed it. I had a difficult time wrapping my mind around what exactly I needed to demonstrate and how I could select artifacts to support the tasks well. I was bigger than any task or portfolio I completed for my master's program. I passed by only 4 points which was a relief and quite frankly, I didn't expect to pass by that much.

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader? The superintendent created a new position in each high school designed to give the principal a person and a position that they could tailor to help increase the school's CCRPI score. The position is titled "Teacher on Assignment" and the principal can assign duties and responsibilities as they see fit for their school. I am the Teacher on Assignment and my assignments include working with the incoming freshman who struggle to acclimate, working with at-risk seniors who may or may not graduate (kind of like a graduation coach), I am over RTI and 504 so I work with teachers helping them to understand goal setting, selecting appropriate interventions and progress monitoring for RTI. Since there is a lot of flexibility to the position, I merely explained to my principal the program I was in and let her know I was willing to take on some leadership and needed the experiences. I was allowed to direct some professional development and lead some parent nights in partnership with the math department.

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated?
   Nothing has changed since I graduated, some of the duties and responsibilities I was given to help me through my program I still have and will probably have indefinitely. More teachers approach me for coaching with RTI than before as I have established myself as the go-to person for anything RTI-related.

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program.

   I am more willing to put myself out there as a resource for other teachers since completing the TL program. I feel I am more comfortable having those conversations and helping teachers to feel at ease asking me anything. I am more confident in my own abilities.

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve?

   My colleagues view me as a dependable resource and know I have an open-door policy. They also know that nothing they share with me leaves my office. I hope they view me as a confidant. My administration view me as a valuable asset to the school. We lost 6 allotments last year and my position was one of the options they had as a position they could cut and all of the administrators agreed that they needed me and my position. That was affirmation to me that what I am doing is making a difference. The families I work with are generally grateful and feel comfortable contacting me with any concerns. I am generally able to diffuse a situation with an unhappy parent and help them. The counselors who work on my hall have overheard a few of my interactions with upset parents and remarked that I handled the situation very positively.

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?
    a. Stay in the classroom
    b. **Train or coach other teachers**
    c. Change to a central office position
    d. **Go into administration**
    e. Facilitate PD
    f. Advocate for others
    g. Other, please specify

11. What formal title do you have? Teacher on Assignment
12. What roles do you serve in your school?

b) Classroom, Leadership, Other (please specify)? What do you do within your school and community? I am over RTI, 504, Saturday School (discipline consequence for tardies to class/school), online credit recovery for seniors, at-risk students and specifically seniors, I mentor 5 students, I assist with testing and probably a lot more that I can't recall right now.

vii. What opportunities would you like offered to you? I'd like to be included in the administrator's meetings so we can be on the same page with some items. They do not view my position as administrative despite having some administrative duties. So sometimes, I'm left out of the loop.

viii. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR

ix. How do you feel about requesting fewer leadership roles? I currently feel I have sufficient leadership roles for the time I have.

x. If you were to support curriculum or a school initiative that you didn't agree with, how would you go about handling this? I feel that as a classroom teacher I was required to support a lot of initiatives that I didn't agree with and they were often tied to job performance, so I was compliant. I would be compliant but might seek to have conversations to suggest we look more closely at the purposed of the curriculum or initiative and see if we couldn't tweak it some.

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader? I believe the state certification was the biggest challenge I faced. As of now, I just take each task one at a time and do the best I can to stay on top of everything. I don't really feel challenged.

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your TL graduate program or in your current position? I suffered a lot of anxiety and self-doubt during my graduate program because 20 years ago I completed the coursework for a master's degree in Spanish Literature, but never sat for the comps because I never completed the 7-page reading list in preparation for the comps. So, I feared that I would fail again, especially in terms of the state certification as it was necessary to complete the program. I had a lot of self-doubt. While I have now completed it, I have been encouraged by some administrators to go back and get my Ed Leadership add on to

become an administrator. Their encouragement is flattering, but I'm still anxious and there is still a lot of self-doubt. As I take on tasks at school and am successful with them, it buoys my confidence, so now there is only the fear of more student loan debt. I feel confident in my current position and feel respected by many at the county level with whom I have participated in trainings and professional development.

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?

    a. They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc. My current staff is very comfortable with me and seek me out for various questions and needs regarding students. Some see me as admin, but most see me as a graduation coach.

    b. Sees you as admin now

    c. How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? The admin is protective of my time not allowing me to be used as a substitute in the classroom when they are short substitutes, they value my time and the work I am doing and are protective of me.

    d. Do you facilitate PD or want to? I have facilitated and PD and would be willing to do so at any time again in the future.

    e. Other (please specify)

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both? I feel I am doing a good job and am valuable to the work in our school. I seek to be a resource for the teachers and to support them in their work with struggling students.

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change? My degree has not changed my position, it has certainly helped me have a wider lens through which to view my responsibilities, but my duties and responsibilities have not changed.

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position? It has not.

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader?

Optional Demographics

Gender: _Female___   Years Teaching __22___ Private School_____ Public School __X_____

Rural, Urban, or Suburban school setting, Other (Specify)_Suburban_____

Grade/Age/or Content Area _9-12/ Spanish_____

Your Race__White_____ & Ethnicity _Caucasian_____

Degree earned __Masters in Teacher Leadership_____

Participant 5 Survey

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.
    a. Where? **I went through _____**
    b. For how long? Cohort, at own pace? **It was a cohort for 4 semesters**
    c. Coursework - **dis-favored disenfranchised African-Americans rather than all groups. Many more groups than just African Americans to think about.**
    d. Capstone Project - **had to create an electronic portfolio**
    e. Dissertation process -**none**
    f. Colleagues - **Getting colleagues to participate in each task was a pain as no one really wanted to do any extra work.**
    g. Experience when bringing your grad program into your school - **This was an easy task as my administration is so easy to work with and support all learning.**
    h. Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program. **I had it easy with balancing everything as my husband is also a teacher and he helped out with family/home while I was able to balance career, coursework and any obligations myself.**

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?
    a. What do you currently teach? **I currently teach 7th grade SS and 7th grade ELA.**
    b. What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more? **I look for my own opportunities as this school has favored teachers that get to attend any outside professional development. District wide, we have days built into the schedule that students have off and we have PD.**

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your TL program that you've used in your career? **Just building relationships has been great. This program has built up my self-confidence as a leader and I have been able to work with the new administration to**

create a Literacy event for students, parents, and community. I hope to add more events like this permanently.

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for and why? **I think the program could have prepared me better for doing the tasks. Not a lot of the coursework was really geared towards the actual tasks in themselves but seemed to push an agenda.**

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you. **Currently in the certification process. I am registered and have begun to put tasks into the submission system.**

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader? **I started out by talking to administration and getting their perspective on how I should go about it. Then I tweaked their advice and have volunteered to take on leadership positions, such as spearheading the literacy event.**

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated? **The new administration this year has made things a little easier. I have built up a few more relationships within the community as well as the school.**

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program. **Before the program, I would not have dared to mentor someone. I had no confidence in my being able to mentor someone effectively. After going through the program, I have more confidence and the strategies to improve my mentoring and teaching.**

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve? **I feel my colleagues view me in a more positive light as a leader. Administration knows they can assign something to me and I will get it done efficiently. In talking with parents and members of the community, they say that they like what I'm doing in the classroom with the students and look forward to working with me outside the classroom at events and such.**

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?
    a. **Stay in the classroom**

     b. Train or coach other teachers

     c. Change to a central office position

     d. Go into administration

     <mark>**e. Facilitate PD**</mark>

     f. Advocate for others

     g. Other, please specify

11. What formal title do you have? **No formal title, just instructor.**

12. What roles do you serve in your school?

     a. Classroom, Leadership, Other (please specify)? What do you do within your school and community? **Within the school, I am a classroom teacher, Student Council adviser, and Fundraiser guru. Within the community, I help plan school events to foster a positive community relationship.**

        i. What opportunities would you like offered to you? **I would like to start a new club for students as well as one that involves the community.**

        ii. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR **I seek out the leadership roles. I have no desire to request fewer leadership roles at this time. As for the curriculum/initiative that I didn't agree with, I would gather data to support my beliefs and present it to admin and anyone else that was involved in decision making.**

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader? **One main problem has been overcoming prejudices and cliques that have been in place here at my school since I was in the system as a student. This school likes to give opportunities to those that are from a long line of teachers or have power within the community.**

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your TL graduate program or in your current position? **The instructors at the college have been really encouraging and supportive. One thing that has been discouraging is the negative feedback from certain parents who are all about "it's who you know, not what you know".**

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?

      a. <mark>**They're comfortabl**</mark>e or seem to feel uneasy, etc.

      b. Sees you as admin now - <mark>**Do NOT see me as admin**</mark>

      c. How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? **Admin keeps in the classroom but gives me the time to advise student council and encourages any projects that I propose.**

      d. Do you facilitate PD or want to? **I do not at this time but would like to.**

      e. Other (please specify)

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both? **I feel I'm accomplishing a lot as a teacher and getting somewhere as a leader.**

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change? **It really hasn't changed my position at the school. I'm okay with that. I prefer to stay in the classroom.**

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position? **I'm more involved with school events and community events and I like it.**

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader? **Talk to people who have attended a teacher leadership graduate program at a variety of schools. Research the schools and make a wise choice. All programs are not built the same. I am happy I decided to attend __. I chose __ over __ because of the bad reviews from people who had attended the TL program at __.**

Optional Demographics:
Gender: Female   Years Teaching: 9   Public school, rural
7th grade ELA/SS   Race: White   Ethnicity: Scottish, Ivory Coast
Degree Earned: Ed.S in Education (Teacher Leadership)

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

Participant 5

Follow-Up Interview Transcription

Int. Hi is this_____? How are you? Is this a good time to talk?

Participant 5: Yes, Ma'am.

Int. OK well thank you firstly for I'm doing the survey and participating in this 'cause I'm wanting to learn a lot more about teacher leadership programs and how well prepared those who are out there in the field feel they are prepared. So, some of the things that I thought were interesting that you mentioned um first I just wanted to clarify was your favorite course work the disenfranchise African-Americans?

Participant 5: Not. I didn't care for that course.

Int. Oh, you did *not* care for that?

Participant 5: Did not.

Int. OK and was there a reason why?

Participant 5: I just felt there were other groups we needed to focus on and not just African Americans. I mean, we spent the whole entire semester, except for the last two weeks studying African Americans. But there were other groups we should have been focusing on as well.

Int. And I'm just curious, did anyone bring this up to the professors?

Participant 5: I did in my final survey.

Int. That's good.

Participant 5: I don't know if anybody else did. But I know I did.

Int. Well that's definitely important to speak for other people, and for all parties, I think.

Participant 5: Yeah.

Int. OK I wanted to clarify your answer on that one. OK and then you mentioned that getting colleagues to participate was a pain so was it for all the just the course work that you had to do?

Participant 5: Yes, it was part of the specialist's tasks that we had to do for the Teacher Leadership program.

Int. Right.

Participant 5: It was just getting anyone who was willing to participate, you had to get a certain amount of colleagues that you had to work with.

Int. Right.

Participant 5: And you had to document all of that, and it's just, they didn't want to do it.

Int. Ok.

Participant 5: I mean it didn't really require any of their time. Just to answer a survey somewhere there, and they…

Int. And even that seemed too much for them.

Participant 5: Yes.

Int. OK so when you're talking about your school, your school sounds kind of interesting uhm.

Participant 5: Yeah, it was an interesting program.

Int. OK so there's the program and then there's the school you teach in. So um one thing I thought was interesting is that first that you thought that this program really built yourself steam up and your self-confidence.

Participant 5: Em-hm.

Int. But I'm wondering did you have it in you then or like you knew you had it in you take to eat up pursue this? Because someone I would think who was the or didn't feel as confident wouldn't fully delve into this. What motivated you to do this?

Participant 5: Well I really didn't think I could do this at all, but my husband, saw me doing it. Because we both started it at the same time. And he just dropped out after the first semester, but he let me do it alone. I think that helped me a lot, because really, I don't think I am a leader. Even now, after I feel more confident in doing things, coming up with ideas to help the school and stuff, if I feel I can add it it, and so it really did help me, and I really feel like I can be a leader now.

Int. And why did your husband not want to continue?

Participant 5: Oh, he's continuing now, he had some medical issues that he had to deal with.

Int. Okay. Right.

Int. So, he started back this semester. And he's in the same program, also then?

Participant 5: Yes, ma'am.

Int. OK and then when you mentioned you thought OK I guess it's a specialist tasks then 'cause I wasn't sure when you had said um "That you thought that the program could have prepared me better for doing tasks." I wasn't sure if you meant the state certification tasks or like your specialist tasks.

Participant 5: Yeah, the state certification tasks.

Int. Oh, the state certification tasks.

Participant 5: Yeah.

Int. Yeah how's that going putting all that together.

Participant 5: I think it's going pretty good. It just takes a long time to get it all written up. Getting all your artifacts situated and uploaded and tagged and everything. But I guess it's going good.

Int. OK good.

Participant 5: I'll feel better once I get the scores back.

Int. Oh, are you hoping to do it for this round, I guess?

Participant 5: Yeah, November the 1st. I want to get it done by then.

Int. Well I wish you luck on that. Have you submitted everything then?

Participant 5: Do what?

Int. Are you almost done submitting everything?

Participant 5: I have two completely done, started on the third, and then I have three more to turn in.

Int. OK so I wanted talk to you about your school because the school you teach in sounds interesting because; well first you said you were there when you were student? Ss that accurate?

Participant 5: Yeah, I came through the system.

Int. OK and then, but you've noticed the same kind of cliques or has anything progressed or changed?

Participant 5: Not a lot. I'd say not a lot. It's the same way it was when I came through.

Int. So, what is the school culture like there?

Participant 5: (Laughing) I don't even know how to describe it. It's just an old traditional way of teaching. Some of them are okay are accepting new ideas, but the teachers themselves. Admin is better than the teachers. A lot of the teachers are really old, and have been there for like thirty years. And they don't really like the new stuff. They don't like anything new. They just want to the worksheet, and have them do it themselves.

Int. Right.

Participant 5: And there is a lot of racial prejudice too.

Int. In what, or in which ways? If you don't mind me asking.

Participant 5: Hispanics and blacks. A lot of teachers don't like teaching the blacks. But again, that's a lot of your older teacher generation. Then it is the younger generation.

Int. Right. And where do you feel you fit into that like knowing or being a product of it but also wanted to change and seeing that you could promote change?

Participant 5: I'm doing my best doing that, and trying to do that.

Int. Well sounds like it I mean that's a big undertaking. Okay, you mentioned they're cliquey, and they are old-fashioned and I know teachers that are like this too who are very set in their ways. Um, is it, is it kinda more like that high school mentality of cliques like popular/unpopular or, or is it really just they are set in their ways and they want to retire and they don't want to welcome diversity or differentiation and things like that?

Participant 5: I think it's more the second one. They're like middle schoolers themselves. I teach at a middle school.

Int. Right.

Participant 5: And they basically act like the middle schoolers.

Int. Have you always taught in middle school?

Participant 5: Yes ma'am.

Int. Would you ever want to change?

Participant 5: I think about heading to high school.

Int. Does your husband also teach in middle school?

Participant 5: Yeah.

Int. And how is that? Can I ask, do you enjoy teaching with him?

Participant 5: Yeah.

Int. OK so just a couple of more questions.

Participant 5: And I did just want to say something else about my school. This school is more football oriented. And basketball and baseball. These three sports, everything revolves around these in this small town. But um, if they ask you to help out, or admin asks to help with something. They're really shocked when I or we actually volunteer. They're shocked that anyone is volunteering to do it.

Int. Really?

Participant 5: That's a lot of the mentality around here. And when that 3:30 hits, they're out the door, and they're not anything. And see, I planned the literacy night, coming up on October the 22nd.

Int. Right.

Participant 5: And I can't hardly get any of the ELA teachers to participate. I've gotten one off of 6th grade, and maybe on one 8th grade, and it's just me on the 7th grade. And that is what I'm dealing with.

Int. And what is the parent involvement like?

Participant 5: Hardly anyone shows up.

Int. Oh.

Participant 5: And when they ask, or try to get parents involved, they'll say, "Well we don't pay for that." It's just like getting a drink and bag of chips.

Int. Right.

Participant 5: I'm also working the football games myself.

Int. OK so uhm but you had to put there's parent involvement with the sports correct?

Participant 5: Yes, there's parent involvement for that.

Int. I heard there's a lot there's a person in my cohort who has the same thing like sports it's not a big deal, but anything actually academic for their children they're not they're not involved. It's really, it's really a shame.

Participant 5: And I don't know if this is because I'm in a school from a really small town, because when I worked in another district there was more parent involvement in both levels.

Int. So, what's your literacy night about?

Participant 5: It's just a general information for discipline and general information, and I'm hoping to do another one in December. But I just get them some general information, like why are we doing this, how can you help your child at home, and the 6th and 7th graders are going to do a little skit. And I have a couple of 8th graders who are going to read what they've wrote.

Int. Oh, that's awesome.

Participant 5: The theme is, Your little light shine. I'm going to make the kids little stars for the night.

Int. Oh, that sounds really cool.

Participant 5: I've got some people who have donated door prizes and food. So, I'm hoping that will go well.

Int. And you're running this all by yourself pretty much.

Participant 5: Well pretty much, I got the school improvement specialist, she just wants it to count for her parent involvement. Her son is there.

Int. One of the things you mentioned was the negative feedback back from parents. About "who you know, not what you know." Do you feel like it's do you think because it's a sports-oriented thing?

Participant 5: I think it is. The sports are what drives the most of the decisions and all.

Int. Right. And what does your admin think about your school culture.

Participant 5: I don't really know, we have a new one admin.

Int. Yes, that's right. I saw that you mentioned that. And you're still trying to feel this person out?

Participant 5: Em-hm. We've had to have a new AP and VP come into our school.

Int. Ok. OK so I'm going to ask about the programs last, but I just I'm curious where when did you when did you graduate recently?

Participant 5: Yeah, just this summer.

Int. I know that you want to stay in the classroom I think that's why a lot of teacher leaders want 'cause we still like the classroom instead of going through the educational leadership. But where ideally would you like to be in let's say 5 years?

Participant 5: I'd still like to be in the classroom.

Int. OK.

Participant 5: I really don't want an admin position.

Int. Yeah.

Participant 5: I want to be with my students.

Int. Yeah. And, do you think that a lot of your colleagues are going to retire and if a new breed of people come in that that uh, that will make it big enough change?

Participant 5: I'm hoping. But like I said, a lot of them are family alumni, or family of teachers. And some of the new ones that we've had are coming into admin positions.

Int. Right.

Participant 5: And they kind of think the same way. But I just hope we can get somebody from out of the county.

Int. Right. Well, I definitely commend you for what you're trying to do and I hope more people catch on. And I also like that you spoke up about other demographics being represented in your program. I had a question about why you chose up the college you did, instead of the other and what were the bad reviews you heard? Is it an all online only cohort?

Participant 5: I think so, I'm pretty sure it is. I have a couple old teacher friends that when to the other school, and said they don't help you. The other peers, there isn't a lot of involvement with the other people in the cohort and stuff. And I know that I need support. I need someone there to help me. And this college, and they have been wonderful with supporting and giving advice and was just wonderful.

Int. So, you did feel supported, and you felt the classes were relevant to what you were learning.

Participant 5: Uh-hum.

Int. And you also mentioned you wanted to do some more professional development or facilitate more. Is there anything specific that you are interested in?

Participant 5: Not right now.

Int. OK but as you maybe get more involved in, I guess you'll just have to see what opens up?

Participant 5: See I am not, but my husband is. He's always done professional development with other people. But in the school then. There's a huge event coming up with the whole district, and he's going to be presenting and I kinda didn't even bother raising my hand to volunteer (laughing). He's the total opposite of me.

Int. Well, is there anything that you would like for me to know or report, or you would wish that programs would offer, or you would want future teacher leaders to think about or consider before diving into a degree program?

Participant 5: Em, not really.

Int. It's kind of to each his own, if it's for you?

Participant 5: (laughing) Yeah, kinda.

Int. OK well thank you so much, because I was curious about these other things. But if you happen to think of anything else that you'd like to share up please do so. You can email or call me. I really appreciate your time. I really hope the literacy night goes really well.

Participant 5: I do too.

Int. I do.

Participant 5: It's my first big undertaking.

Int. Yeah it sounds like it, but I think it could be really fun specially when the kids are involved in there acting or performing. That's always awesome you know. I will also let you know if I have any other further questions. But please feel free to reach out if you think of anything.

Participant 5: Will do.

Int. OK thank you so much. Have a great week thank you OK bye.

Participant 5: Bye

Participant 6 Survey

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.

    a. Where? _____

    b. For how long? Cohort, at own pace? Cohort, 2 years

    c. Coursework: Much of it felt unnecessary. There were a few classes that I realize now were prepping me for the state certification.

    d. Capstone Project- Related to my PLC coordinator position. I felt this was one of the things that really did prepare me.

    e. Dissertation process- I'm in that now. I am passed the comps defense and in the process of fine-tuning my first three chapters for the IRB. I feel that I want to be much more hurried than the committee.

    f. Colleagues- I have met awesome people through the program. It really helped that first semester when we were told to find critical friends. They have truly proven to be a critical need for me. 😊

    g. Experience when bringing your grad program into your school. I have been blessed with very supportive co-workers and administration who allow me time to work on coursework because they know it is focused on our school and it has the potential to help the school, not just myself.

    h. Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program. This was perhaps the hardest part. Finding time to accomplish it all is difficult especially when one goes home from work. Having small children in the home does not permit quiet work time, and I feel like I have missed out on some things. However, I make sure I am transparent with my children and let them know why I am doing this.

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?

    a. What do you currently teach? Middle grades, one 6th grade ELA class

b. What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more? I help coordinate professional development district-wide and in my school. We utilize PLCs to the fullest and try to base agendas on teacher needs.

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your TL program that you've used in your career? My capstone and the process of reflecting on my own practices

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for and why? I feel the relationship aspect of the teacher leadership program was lacking. How do we deal with the resistance we sometimes feel from co-workers who we have worked with for years? It gets into a sticky situation when you are now mentoring them or expressing leadership.

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you. I have not taken this yet.

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader? I have always been a type-A personality. I decided to try to further my degree a year after my superintendent asked me to lead PLCs. I spoke with her personally and she encouraged me and expressed her support.

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated? I haven't graduated quite yet.

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program. I feel I am much more reflective in my practices now. I take pride in putting more planning into my lessons. I have to set an example.

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve? For the most part, I feel supported by all. I do have a few co-workers who

have been working here longer than me that I perceive to feel a little animosity towards me at times when I am asked to do or lead something.

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?

     a. Stay in the classroom

     b. Train or coach other teachers

     c. Change to a central office position

     d. Go into administration

     e. Facilitate PD

     f. Advocate for others

     g. Other, please specify

          i. I'd really like all of these except administration. I have always said my intentions were not to become a principal or assistant principal despite my current principal's trying to convince me to.

11. What formal title do you have? Professional Learning Coordinator

12. What roles do you serve in your school?

    a. Classroom, Leadership, Other (please specify)? What do you do within your school and community? Lead PL, on every committee we have, I think

        i. What opportunities would you like offered to you? More coaching tasks

        ii. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR

            1. How do you feel about requesting fewer leadership roles?

            2. If you were to support curriculum or a school initiative that you didn't agree with, how would you go about handling this?

For the most part, I feel pretty open to expressing my like or dislike for a new initiative. I feel my administration is open to hearing all teachers' ideas, mine included. I sometimes request too many leadership positions. It is a balance of others telling me that I am "biting off more than I can chew" and me trying to please everyone and get everything done that I can.

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader?

Again, the balance seems to be the biggest obstacle.

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your TL graduate program or in your current position? I have mostly only felt encouraged throughout the program. There have been a few professors that I feel didn't want to put the time into helping me improve or helping me in general. That wasn't always the case though.

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?
    a. They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc. Some uneasy. The ones that seem that way are the ones who have worked here forever or who hold the same current degree I do (before I complete this one).
    b. Sees you as admin now. Some do, but I hope they still see me as a teacher too.
    c. How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? They feel I am capable of doing many tasks. They know I will give 100% to whatever I am asked to do.
    d. Do you facilitate PD or want to? Yes.
    e. Other (please specify)

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both?
    I feel like I am doing great, especially considering the fact that I am currently working on a thesis.

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change? I have recently stepped into more coaching, but I don't know if that is based on my degree pursuance or the fact that our academic coach left this year.

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position? I feel more empowered. If I can do this, I feel like I can do anything. I used to dread doing school work because I was always second-guessing myself, but now I feel confident in my abilities.

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader? I feel the grad program can sometimes be quite vague and uncommunicative in its requirements and requests. For

TEACHER LEADERS' EXPERIENCES

example, many professors have given us assignments that they do not or (worse yet) cannot

elaborate on. It is frustrating to say the least.

Optional Demographics

Gender: ___F____   Years Teaching ____15_____ Private School_____ Public School _all____

Rural, Urban, or Suburban school setting, Other (Specify)____rural_____

Grade/Age/or Content Area ___Middle grades ELA_____

Your Race____W_____ & Ethnicity _____

Degree earned _____Currently pursuing Ed.D in Teacher Leadership, hold: bachelors in middle grades ed, masters in curriculum and development, and specialist in middle grades

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Participant 7 Survey

1. Tell me about the teacher leadership program you went through.

    a) Where? _____

    b) For how long? Cohort, at own pace? Cohort, but pacing was off because I had to take some semesters off here and there. The program has taken years.

    c) Coursework. Online, there were some workshops that were optional but available

    d) Capstone Project, yes, we had to do a final project, and do a dissertation, and work on the state certification

    e) Dissertation process: in progress

    f) Colleagues: the support from my cohort group was really important to me, but I didn't feel like we could get as close as we would have if we were in classes in person. But there is so little time to actually get to campus, plus all the additional duties we do.

    g) Experience when bringing your grad program into your school. I used strategies of professional development and how to teach adults and gear learning more toward them, rather than the younger students.

    h) Balancing career, family, and obligations while being in a degree program. This was really hard to balance. I have a family, two young kids, so family obligations, and an older member who we take care of. My school also takes up so much time, and the kids and the extra work is a lot, plus the costs of tuition and books.

2. What ways are you using your TL program currently in your school?

    a. What do you currently teach? I teach middle school math.

    b. What kind of professional development do you participate in at your school or district-wide or more? I show ways that teachers can integrate technology and other subjects along with some project-based learning.

3. What have been some of the most useful parts of your TL program that you've used in your career? Learning how to work with adults.

4. What did you hope your TL program would have better prepared you for and why? I do not feel prepared for the state certification process at all. The tasks that we had to do were not aligned or sufficient enough. I had to take extra semester to do more work at my school to get the tasks done for the portfolio. This exam is ridiculously hard compared to other exams, so I've heard, and the program is not as offered or supported. The whole process is confusing to me.

5. Tell me about how the state certification process and exam went for you. I'm still gathering all the work together. Some participants have been difficult to get forms signed from, or they are too busy to continue with participating.

6. How did you first start to embed yourself within your school to become a teacher leader? I was team lead, and liked doing that position. I just decided to see where this degree would take me too.

7. How have your experiences at your school changed since you graduated? It hasn't changed much, except that my position may be changing from classroom to the EIP small group students.

8. Describe what kind of changes you have made in your teaching or mentoring practices before and after your TL program. I feel more confident doing PD. Before I got so much anxiety about talking in front of everyone. But now, I'm getting better. I've actually gotten a lot more confident during parent conferences, and during district visitors. They aren't as intimidating as I felt they were before.

9. How do you feel your colleagues view you? Your administration? The families and community you serve? I get along with my colleagues really well. I think with the position change, that affects how they view me, or just what role I'm playing now within the school. I get to talk and interact with a lot more teachers at various grade levels now.

10. Ideally, what would you like to do with your teacher leadership degree?
   a. Stay in the classroom
   b. Train or coach other teachers
   c. Change to a central office position
   d. Go into administration
   e. Facilitate PD
   f. Advocate for others
   g. Other, please specify

11. What formal title do you have? Middle Grades Math Teacher

12. What roles do you serve in your school? I support students who need additional learning support.
   a. Classroom, Leadership, Other (please specify)? What do you do within your school and community?
        i. What opportunities would you like offered to you?
        ii. How do you feel about requesting more leadership roles? OR
        iii. How do you feel about requesting fewer leadership roles?
        iv. If you were to support curriculum or a school initiative that you didn't agree with, how would you go about handling this?

I feel like I would be able to help the other teachers so much more if my case load weren't so huge, and the other teachers told me or admin what they needed more from me.

13. Tell me about any challenges you have faced as a teacher leader? I often wonder if this graduate program plus working on this state certification is actually worth it. I have more questions about what can I do with this, what am I doing, what are goals, or how can I help better achieve these goals? I feel supported in my school, just not used as I thought I would be. And again, that outcome has been vague.

14. What has been encouraging and discouraging for you while in your TL graduate program or in your current position? There has been a huge lack of clarity on what expectations are from some of the instructors. Some have also been confusing, rude, or discouraging. Me and some of my cohort members have been met with hostility where the instructors were not helpful at all. There have been a few however that have been really helpful, supportive, and have tried to

connect their coursework to be relevant to our final study and certification. If it weren't for the doctoral degree, I think I would have gone with another school, or another doctoral degree.

15. How do you feel your current staff engages with you?

    a. They're comfortable or seem to feel uneasy, etc. They're comfortable.

    b. Sees you as admin now, no

    c. How do you feel your admin views you, use your time, etc.? they know I'm willing and available, but I don't always have time to do the ideas we come up with.

    d. Do you facilitate PD or want to? I have for the program, but haven't since.

    e. Other (please specify)

16. How do you feel you are doing at your school as a teacher, teacher-leader, or both? I feel good at my school. My school culture is fairly open. Again, I just question whether this was the best degree option, or how I can better use it with my staff and for admin.

17. In what ways has your teacher leadership degree changed your position at the school, and what are your feelings about that change? It hasn't changed my position, but I feel I've earned the respect of my colleagues more.

18. In what ways has your life changed since your TL program to your current position? I feel more confident as a teacher leader. I'm in a lot more debt than I was before. And I'm getting closer to getting my family and life back to a routine as my program should be ending soon.

19. What other experiences or thoughts would you like to share that may be relevant to learning about teacher leadership graduate programs and being a teacher-leader? I think it's one thing to be a teacher-leader, it's a whole other endeavor to go through a doctoral program to get there. I think if roles were more defined and there was more time allocated toward teacher-leadership duties then it would be viewed as a more important separate or specialized area. At schools now, it's as if it's a given that some will take on these roles. Those who choose to do it for a formal graduate degree are a very different motivated group of individuals.