A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF K-12 LEADERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CHANGING FROM TEACHER-CENTERED PRACTICES TO STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

by

Claudia Burregi

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders at Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. The theory guiding this study is Lewin's change theory, which undergirds the premise that as individuals embrace change, they are better equipped to support the vision of why change is needed, ultimately leading to lasting change. A transcendental study was used to capture the essence of the change from TCL to SCL experience of ten educational leaders from seven schools in BOSD with no less than two years of leadership experience. Data were collected through individual interviews, journal prompts, and focus groups. Data analysis will be conducted using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Kenn method to answer the question: "How do educational leaders describe their experiences and perceptions of changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices in their K-12 schools?" Seven themes were derived from the data analysis 1)SCL is beneficial, 2) agile leadership, 3) relationships are key, 4) change is challenging, 5) teacher growing pains, 6) time, and 7) importance of buy-in. The data revealed that SCL is beneficial at the classroom and building levels for schools that implement this pedagogy. Additionally, the data indicated leadership styles, practices, and time matter if stakeholders are to buy into the change to SCL. Further, this study provides insight into how time is needed for implementation and professional development which may reduce the challenges educational leaders face during pedagogical change.

Keywords: student-centered, educational leaders, teacher-centered, 21st-century skills, leadership, K-12

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, from whom all good things flow! Without his divine provision, none of this would be possible. He is the one who ordains my steps. With love and gratitude, I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Noah, Elijah, Rebekah, and Hannah. May you always put God first in your pursuit of knowledge and heed the divine calling He has bestowed upon you. To Jaedon, always know that I love you and with God, you can do all things. Payton, thank you for your love and support!

To my husband, Dannie. I am so thankful that God brought us together when he did. Without your support, love, and encouragement I do not think this journey would have been the success it has been. I pray for God's continual protection and leadership as He continues to guide our paths together as husband and wife. I love you!

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:48, New International Version, 1973/2011). I praise God for giving me the skills and knowledge to do what He has called me to do.

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List of Abbreviations

A Nation at Risk Report (ANAR)

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)

Professional Development (PD)

Student-Centered Learning (SCL)

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

How educational leaders perceive the need for change can determine the course of acceptance or resistance to change from their followers. Society is continually searching for people with 21st-century skills for the workforce, and K-12 schools are on the front lines of equipping students with them (Eady et al., 2021). As such, educational leaders in K-12 schools are changing pedagogy to provide students with the skills needed to remain competitive in the workforce and the global market (Dean & East, 2019). K-12 schools are moving towards student-centered learning practices where learners engage with the study material and apply it to relevant real-life situations (McPherson, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021a). Therefore, due to the ubiquitous nature of the phrase, student-centered learning, there is a need for further exploration, especially from the educational leader's perspective. This chapter will provide an overview of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study addressing the gap in research by examining the educational leaders' experiences of changing toward student-centered practices in their K-12 schools. Chapter One provides the background of the study in the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of educational leaders and student-centered learning practices. It will also include the problem statement, purpose statement, study's significance, research questions, and all imperative definitions. This chapter will conclude with a detailed summary of the pertinent content related to this study.

Background

Throughout history, the qualifications of educational leaders have stayed the same, though the role of the educational leader has changed significantly (Sugrue, 2015), as has the term leader (Young et al., 2017). With no universally accepted definition of leadership

(Leithwood et al., 1990), an educational leader's role can vary and depend on the school context (Harris & Jones, 2019). It is implied that the term leader is a relatively recent phenomenon within the educational landscape (Sugrue, 2015). However, regardless of the educator holding the title of leader, they indirectly contribute to student learning while directly influencing the output of teaching (Leithwood et al., 2020b). Improving and sustaining student achievement by supporting good education (Leithwood et al., 2010) can only be done if educational leaders comprehend, adopt, and implement SCL (McNeill et al., 2018), which equips students for the 21st-century workforce. The background of this study will be described in this section through the development of the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of the importance of the educational leader's role in adopting and fostering the implementation of student-centered learning.

Historical Context

The United States educational system has a rich history involving significant individuals dating to before the nation was born in 1776 (Gutek, 2011). Though their educational ideas varied, as suggested by Gutek, educational leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann, John Dewey, and Robert Owen all agreed on the importance of educating individuals to become active citizens of the communities in which they live. Thomas Jefferson believed education was foundational to providing the skills students would need to participate as citizens of this nation. At the same time, Horace Mann was an advocate of public education who thought schools should emphasize the cultural heritage of the United States (Gutek, 2011; Kober & Tentner, 2020). John Dewey believed that learning was not just affected by what was taught within a school but in conjunction with what was learned in society, and Robert Owen believed that the learning environment so influenced the learner that they would take on the qualities of their teachers,

impacting the type of citizen they would become (Gutek, 2011). A common thread seen is that students were the focus and what, how, and by whom they were taught would directly impact the communities in which they would eventually work (Kober & Tentner, 2020). A current thought throughout the literature is that student-centered learning is the best way to equip students with 21st-century skills for today's workforce (Eady et al., 2021; McGunagle & Zizka, 2020). Education's purpose is still to prepare students for the workforce and society (Eady et al., 2021; Kaput, 2018).

Economic and industrial systems are continuously evolving and are changing the trajectory of public education (Marouli, 2021). Due to this, public education has had to consider redesigning its system (Kaput, 2018), especially when considering the unrelenting duties of the principals and the rise of accountability in their leadership role (Wang et al., 2022). This redesign has included adding teacher leaders and implementing a pedagogy that equips students with the required skills needed in a changing world (Bernard et al., 2019; Marouli, 2021; Otara et al., 2019). Thus, instead of the hierarchical structure of teacher-led instruction where students receive predetermined knowledge, schools across the United States and around the world are adopting and implementing student-centered pedagogies (Friedlaender et al., 2014; Kaput, 2018).

American early schools were driven by a focus on teaching discipline, manners, and religion by positively or negatively rewarding students (Gutek, 2011). Additionally, principalship was based on leadership, administration, and pedagogy (Campbell, 1999). Change can be further seen around the 1980s when educational reform encouraged a shift in American schools, raising the bar of making principals accountable to a broad spectrum of stakeholders (Wang et al., 2022). The interplay of multiple pressures on principals, such as bureaucratic, legal, performance-based, moral, and professional (Shipps & White, 2009; Soares & Galisson, 2021),

have become the culprit of the shift in how principals work (Wang et al., 2022); thus, shared leadership is seen as the solution (Döös, & Wilhelmson, 2021).

In December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law (United States Department of Education, n.d.), reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Young et al., 2017, p. 706). The purpose was to require states to measure performance to improve public primary and secondary schools to integrate college and career readiness (Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2020). More recent educational policies instituted the need for educational leaders to gain an understanding of how to adopt and encourage the implementation of pedagogies in a sustainable way (Holfelder, 2019) to conduct observations of classroom instruction and to provide effective feedback to teachers (Marshall, 2013) which encourages performance growth. Historically though, principal's accountability pressures have been on improving reading and writing (Halverson et al., 2011), and yet it is evident that educational reforms such as with NGSS require re-education of principal's understanding of pedagogical best practices (McNeill et al., 2018; Perrone & Tucker, 2019).

Throughout history, a constant theme has been that for students to succeed, their teachers must be equipped with the skills to provide them with the best learning environments, and now, they must ensure they create these environments early on by supporting teaching and learning with 21st-century skill outcomes (Bernard et al., 2019; Care et al., 2017). Though the role and titles of educational leaders have changed, current research supports the premise that educational leaders must support their teachers through a proper understanding of pedagogies fit for equipping students with 21st-century skills (McNeill et al., 2018; McPherson, 2021). The educational landscape will continue to be reconfigured to reflect the current societal needs;

however, the literature strongly supports the historical precedence for student-centered learning, and “learning by doing” (Gutek, 2011, p. 350) must not be forgotten.

Social Context

The social aspect of this problem extends beyond the principal and vice-principal to all qualified educational leaders. It can be assumed that it goes beyond these borders to the teachers and the students they serve, which impacts the communities where these students live and work (Maddox et al., 2018). Within the 21st-century educational system, stakeholders are encouraging leaders to guide their teachers to use more innovative strategies which equip students with knowledge and skills to embrace a changing world (Fahnert, 2019; Otara et al., 2019). Educators in the 21st century need to understand how students become self-regulated learners (Taranto & Buchanan, 2020). A self-regulated learner is a means of empowering students to take their learning into their own hands (Jansen et al., 2020). Due to this, students acquire the ability to think and problem-solve, skills the global markets are looking for (Koehorst et al., 2021). By way of professional learning, educators understand pedagogies that equip students with 21st-century skills (AACTE & Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010), such as those that allow students to be in charge of their learning (Wilson et al., 2019). Arthur Levine is noted for saying that the challenge facing education is to do a different job from what they already do but move towards preparing a new world (AACTE & Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010, p. 14). Educational leaders, as a team, must grapple with not only student outcomes or how to support their teachers best (AACTE & Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010), they must understand that their knowledge of pedagogy will directly impact the overall outcome of the school’s success or failure (Kaya, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2004; Ulferts, 2019). This directly affects

society (Care et al., 2017) and thus reaches beyond a school's boundaries. Education as a change agent cannot be underestimated (Campanini, 2021).

As student-centered learning is being adopted worldwide (Otara et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021b), looking at how others have adopted and implemented student-centered learning (SCL) with all the challenges and rewards it brings can equip others with the knowledge and encouragement to pursue their change toward SCL and its implementation. Within a school setting, leadership plays an essential role in influencing how pedagogies are approached (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). This ultimately can impact various stakeholders, including parents and teachers, government personnel, educational trainers, and representatives from nongovernment organizations (Care et al., 2017; Soares & Galisson, 2021).

Theoretical Context

With an increase of states encouraging K-12 schools to change to student-centered learning (SCL; Eronen & Kärnä, 2018), the exploration of K-12 educational leaders' lived experiences during this change, is highly suggested in the literature (Bonner et al., 2020; McPherson, 2021; Ryan & Cox, 2017). McPherson's (2021) study explored teachers' and principals' experiences and perceptions in transitioning from teacher-centered learning (TCL) to SCL. Ample research has been found on a teacher's transitory process, but fewer studies focused on principals (McPherson, 2021). McPherson's focus on Idaho's teachers and principals revealed a need to explore further the impact and factors that influence faculty as they change to student-center pedagogies. This seminal research inspired the focus of Louisiana K-12 educational leaders as they experience the change process to student-centered practices and how they, as leaders, encourage the implementation of SCL within their schools.

Literature reinforces the need for educational leaders to support their teachers to be effective in equipping students with 21st-century skills (Tandika, 2022; Tapilouw et al., 2021). Further, it is suggested that educational change stems from the classroom's instructional quality as it relates to the learning outcomes for the 21st-century learner (Kim et al., 2019; Tapilouw et al., 2021). Skills such as those that produce positive social-emotional behaviors and vocational success derive from K-12 schools that have promoted and focused on SCL within their learning objectives (Woods-Groves et al., 2019). Therefore, to prepare students for future generations in this technologically complex and economically competitive world, students must solve complex problems while learning how to be creative and regulate their learning (Gardiner, 2020). That is why the student-centered approach has been suggested over the years and more so recently (Richmond, 2014).

Kurt Lewin's (1947) theory of change emphasizes that within a group setting, an individual, such as an educational leader, can influence the group toward a needed change. Educational leadership deals with issues related to overseeing improvements in student achievement and school performance by ensuring current best practices are implemented (Broome & Marshall, 2020, Chapter 1; Tran & Gandolfi, 2020). The success of SCL being implemented depends on the educational leader's ability to manage struggles and change (Tran & Gandolfi, 2020). Lewin's (1947) 3-Step model of change promoted this examination of understanding how within a group setting, an educational leader can influence the group towards a needed change if they recognize they need to change as well.

Modern constructivist approaches are the foundation of SCL (Duffy & Tobias, 2009; Slavin, 2000) as it shifts the focus of teaching and learning away from direct instruction and places the knowledge construction on students (Bernard et al., 2021). Being built over the last

century by Piaget, Dewey, and Vygotsky, among others, SCL is purported to involve the individual's capacity, ability, and tendency to learn within their learning environment to form new information and skills (Lamon, 2022). This learning environment is considered today the most conducive to students' learning skills for the workforce (Taranto & Buchanan, 2020). Change can occur when educators have the knowledge needed to ensure SCL is effectively adopted and implemented (Kim et al., 2019; McPherson, 2021; Taranto & Buchanan, 2020) within their schools. Therefore, this study extended the existing knowledge by adding the educational leaders' voices. As a primary influencer of teachers' output and as the second most instrumental position in student success (Leithwood et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2008), the educational leader's perspective has not only been under-explored, it is crucial in a changing academic landscape trying to equip students for the 21st-century workforce (McGunagle & Zizka, 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem is that educational leaders need to change their mindsets and their actions from being teacher-centered to being student-centered (Green, 2021; McPherson, 2021) for their teachers and students to change their perspectives on what a teaching and learning environment in the 21st century should look like. Research indicates that school leadership directly impacts school outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Robinson et al., 2008; Witziers et al., 2003), including student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2020b). Across six studies, Grissom et al. (2021) showed that principals matter substantially in student success. This same study demonstrated that the impact of having an effective principal was nearly as significant as having an effective teacher in overall student success.

Current research shows that the closer principals are to the center of teaching and learning, their impact is positive toward improving the educational standards in their schools (Grissom et al., 2021; Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021). Thus, teachers who are supported by their educational leaders and are implementing student-centered practices in their classrooms report a range of positive results in their students, including increased communication (Keiler, 2018; Lo, 2021) and peer learning skills (Ghani et al., 2021). Implementing student-centered learning effectively equips students with the required 21st-century skills (Fahnert, 2019; Keiler, 2018), such as critical thinking and problem-solving (Woods-Groves et al., 2019). Though an educational leader's role in many ways indirectly impacts a student's success (Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021), research has shown that how principals impact their teachers is directly related to the overall success of students (Grissom et al., 2021). There is a need to understand educational leaders' lived experiences and perceptions in their journey of change and how they encourage implementing and adopting student-centered teaching and learning practices (McPherson, 2021) within their schools. The reason being is that educational leaders are critical in institutional change (Bonner et al., 2020; Keiler, 2018; Koh, 2018; Lo, 2021).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders at Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. At this stage in the research, student-centered learning (SCL) will be generally defined as a paradigm that places students in the driver's seat of the learning process (Glasgow, 1997) while cultivating student engagement through critical constructs of autonomy, scaffolding, and audience (Wong, 2021). The qualitative research theory guiding this study is Lewin's (1947)

change theory. He proposed that for people to change, they need to move from their current state into one where they can realize that change is not only possible but required.

Significance of the Study

Though principals have always been regarded as public education managers, their responsibilities have been shared, and their role has expanded to include educational leaders who are all agents of change (Campanini, 2021). With these changes, there is a need to understand how educational leaders change their perceptions of teaching and learning environments and how they encourage implementing student-centered learning (SCL), which equips students with 21st-century skills (Eady et al., 2021). Current research fails to identify educational leaders' perceptions and lived experiences while changing towards SCL and how they have encouraged its implementation within their schools. This study attempted to capture the essence of educational leaders' lived experiences of changing to SCL.

Theoretical Significance

Leaders and followers are known to be constrained and be influenced by one another (Thoroughgood et al., 2018), thus, understanding the educational leader's impact on teachers and students while changing to student-centered practices can extend the idea that student-centered practices are conducive to the 21st-century learner (Carvalho & Santos, 2021; Dean & East, 2019). The foundation for SCL has seven central tenets as suggested by Kaput (2018): (1) students build relationships, (2) they have a choice and a voice, (3) there is a competency-based progression, (4) teachers remain vigilant of monitoring student needs (Herranen et al., 2018; Keiler, 2018; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Lo, 2021) (5) real-world problem solving, (6) positive identity, and (7) learning anytime, anywhere. The 21st-century workforce is looking to educators to teach these skills needed for a competing working world (Kinboon, 2019; Sahoo, 2021; Silber-Varod

et al., 2019). It has been noted that within the past decade, the SCL approach has been supported by the workforce and federal incentives to encourage classroom innovation (Carvalho & Santos, 2021; Kaput, 2018; Sahoo, 2021). This can be seen through the significant growth of schools throughout the United States and worldwide now implementing student-centered learning practices (Green & Harrington, 2021; Matsuyama et al., 2019; Woods-Groves & Choi, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021b). Therefore, by exploring the educational leaders' voices, other educational leaders in the United States can understand the process of adopting a student-centered focus to implement a 21st-century best practice pedagogy (Herranen et al., 2018).

Empirical Significance

Empirical research on SCL consistently shows that when implemented, students achieve above similar students who are not learning in an SCL environment (Kaput, 2018; Matsuyama et al., 2019; Shaalan, 2019). The meta-analysis conducted by Bernard et al. (2021) synthesized 140 effect sizes, which showed a positive effect for SCL compared to teacher-centered learning. Yet the research on student-centered practices was limited to teachers' and students' perceptions (S. Constantinou, 2020; Trinidad, 2020; Trinidad & Ngo, 2019). Although current research explored the teacher and students within an SCL environment, it showed that leadership support was vital (Bonner et al., 2020; Eronen & Kärnä, 2018; Green, 2021; Onurkan & Özer, 2017). Some researchers, however, are proponents of furthering the exploration of educational leaders' perceptions and lived experiences as they change toward student-centered practices within their schools (McPherson, 2021; Ryan & Cox, 2017). This study will attempt to provide an understanding that can assist educational stakeholders in filling the void created by the lack of literature addressing the lived experiences of educational leaders as they change their mindsets and actions toward student-centered learning (Green, 2021; McPherson, 2021).

Practical Significance

This study will be conducted in a Louisiana school district with educational leaders who experienced the change to SCL within their schools. Regardless of their title, all educators can feel overwhelmed when they do not feel equipped for their role (Phillips, 2021; Stark & Koslouski, 2022; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2021). Changes in pedagogy present educators with new stressors. That is why professional development for an educator can provide them with the knowledge and understanding of how to support each other and their students (Phillips, 2021) during pedagogical change. To compel change, K-12 educational leaders, as change agents, benefit from having an understanding of why change is needed to facilitate the change required (Ensminger et al., 2004, p. 61). Louisiana has been in the process of encouraging the implementation of SCL throughout core courses (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2021). This study can support the South Louisiana school district with information about how educational leaders perceive the process of change to SCL to encourage further implementation. This study will provide a deeper understanding of educational leaders' perceptions of change to an SCL environment within their schools.

Research Questions

Research questions guide a researcher's description of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Research suggests that the principal's leadership role is the primary driver of institutional improvement efforts at the school level (Bryk, 2010; Howard et al., 2019). The research questions of this study will thoroughly explore the lived experiences of K-12 educational leaders who have changed to student-centered practices and encouraged the adoption of and implementation of student-centered learning practices within their schools. One central research question (CRQ) and three sub-questions (SQ) will guide this transcendental phenomenology.

Central Research Question

How do educational leaders describe their experiences and perceptions of changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices in their K-12 schools?

Sub-Question One

How do educational leaders perceive the effect of the change process on SCL practices at the classroom and building levels?

Sub-Question Two

How do K-12 educational leaders perceive their role in encouraging a mindset change from a teacher focus to a student-centered focus through its implementation across subjects?

Sub-Question Three

What leadership practices do K-12 educational leaders find effective in mitigating personal resistance throughout the process of changing from a teacher-centered learning mindset to encouraging and enforcing the implementation of student-centered learning within their schools?

Definitions

1. *Educational leader* – An educational leader is a solid instructional leader responsible for creating positive school culture while providing leadership that assures all members of the school work and learn in a physically and emotionally safe, inviting, and nourishing environment (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002).
2. *Educational Problem* – An educational problem can be both a principal's undesirable and unsatisfactory situation that can be an 'opportunity for improvement' (Turnbull & Hoppe, 2019; p. 13) and a technical one that can be solved by expertise and proper management (Heifetz, 1994).

3. *School Climate* -School climate is the behavior and action of people in the school who are members of its social system and is an outgrowth of the more stable school culture, which is the shared beliefs of people in the school community (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 82).
4. *School Community* – School community is a collaborative process between schools, parents, and communities working together to accomplish mutual goals with a specific focus on student learning and development (Kim & Gentle-Genitty, 2020).
5. *Self-Regulated Learning* – Self-regulated learning is goal orientated, placing the learner as the director in their learning environment. It shifts the ownership of learning from teachers to students (Panadero, 2017; Taranto & Buchanan, 2020).
6. *Servant Leadership* – Servant leadership advocates a group-oriented approach to analysis and decision-making to strengthen institutions and improve society by placing followers first (Greenleaf, 1998).
7. *Standardized Education* – Standardized education is where students are controlled by curricula, tests, and mandates (Elliott et al., 2014).
8. *Student-Centered Learning* – Student-centered learning (SCL) is an approach to learning in which learners choose not only what to study but also how and why that topic might be of interest (Rogers, 1983).
9. *Teacher-Centered Learning* – Teacher-centered learning, also termed traditional teaching (Raja & Khan, 2018), is a teaching process adhered to a fixed curriculum and a learning process that emphasizes basic skills (Spooner, 2015).

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders at Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. In this era, innovative learning approaches must be relevant to students for the 21st century (Tandika, 2022). With limited literature on the lived experiences of educational leaders' process of changing to a student-centered mindset and how they encourage implementing SCL practices within their schools requires deeper exploration. The problem is that educational leaders need to realize the need to change their mindsets and their actions from being teacher-centered to being student-centered (Carvalho & Santos, 2021; Green, 2021; McPherson, 2021) for their teachers and students to change their perspectives on what a teaching and learning environment in the 21st century should look like. SCL is shown to have seven tenets identified by Kaput (2018). A deeper study that describes educational leaders' experiences through the lens of change theory will support a better understanding of what supports are needed during a change to SCL. The outcome of this study may lead to best practices for understanding the change process from teacher-centered methods to student-centered ones.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for Louisiana K-12 educational leaders to equip students with 21st-century skills. This systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore the problem of educational leaders needing to realize the need to change their mindsets and their actions from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning for their schools to adopt the pedagogical change conducive to equipping students with skills for the 21st century. The review of the related literature, the work that has been done, and where gaps exist in this literature are highlighted. Moreover, the structure of this chapter provides the theoretical framework and theorist underlining the study, the literature related to educational leaders focusing on the change in the role of the leadership, educational leadership's impact on both teachers and students, student-centered learning compared to teacher-centered education, 21st-century benefits of student-centered learning environments in K-12 schools, the challenges of implementing student-centered learning, and the beliefs of both teachers and students toward student-centered learning. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a general conclusion of the literature surrounding the factors which led to the change in pedagogy, presenting context and demonstrating a likely need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research study derives from Lewin's (1947) change theory. This theory aids in understanding the change process and how lasting change can occur in educational organizations. Kurt Lewin's view of change considers that for change to begin, individuals must perceive that a change is needed. Then they can move toward a new desired

level of behavior, solidifying the new behavior as the new norm (Lewin, 1947). Therefore, research must be grounded in theory so the results can be interpreted within a framework of understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hence, to be effective, research must be guided by theory to understand better the relationship among phenomena (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Change Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this literature review is Kurt Lewin's change theory which emerged from his experience as a psychologist and social scientist (Crosby, 2021a). The Lewinian change theory is rooted in the combination of his life's work in training-action-research, group dynamics, his beliefs on democratic principles and leadership, group decision, field theory, the social construction of reality, and lasting change for the betterment of humanity (Allport, 1947; Crosby, 2021a, p. 3). Lewin intended for each approach to be considered jointly to understand the change process within an organizational environment (Crosby, 2021a; Cummings et al., 2016). Each challenges the status quo, which can catalyze effective change (Burnes, 2004; Cooke, 1999) while emphasizing human behavior during the change process (Allport, 1947; Lewin, 1947). His most influential theory, which proposes a three-stage change model: unfreezing, moving (or changing), and freezing (Burnes, 2020; Cummings et al., 2016), highlights how people will react when faced with changes. Therefore, change theory posits that steps must be taken to create lasting change (Allport, 1947) within a group setting (Lewin, 1947).

Educational leaders are challenged on how to encourage the implementation of SCL, though pressured to improve teacher practices and student outcomes (Ghavifekr & Ramzy, 2020; Kaput, 2018; McPherson, 2021). Research provides 40 years of evidence on how change theory has influenced most western theories dominating organizational and change management (Burnes, 2004; Cummings et al., 2016). This theory emphasizes that leaders drive change within

an organization while understanding that external and internal environmental challenges occur throughout the change process (Jung et al., 2020). Change theory describes the causal chain of events (Resch et al., 2014; United States Department of Education, 2019) that explains an aspect of change beyond a single initiative (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). By explicitly differentiating between the intervention (change from teacher-centered learning) to current best practice (student-centered learning), Lewin's change theory illuminates how effective change can last within a group setting (Crosby, 2021b; Forsyth, 2019; Resch et al., 2014; United States Department of Education, 2019).

Lewin recognized that in the first phase, unfreezing, though the individual is not yet committed or confident of change, in theory, the individual can choose the action required to bring forth change (Crosby, 2021b; Forsyth, 2019) through the identification of any resisting forces (Crosby, 2021a). This is accomplished by the individual replacing old ideas and practices learned within one's cultural environment. Lewin saw that individuals would need to adopt new behaviors, values, and attitudes within their organizational structure (Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021) as they moved toward change. In this phase, Lewin believed that challenges would be inevitable and feelings of uncertainty about the needed change could lead to an individual being uncomfortable with the change (Crosby, 2021a). Therefore, presenting a need to remove barriers that can prevent movement toward change (Burnes, 2020). In refreezing, an individual accepts the difference they have made, emanating a sense of accomplishment as they embrace this worthwhile transformation (Burnes, 2020; Crosby, 2021b; Lewin, 1947; Memon et al., 2021). Lewin's (1947) belief was that an individual could change behavior when anchored to a group, such as in an educational setting. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of the needed change is realized through the change process, causing change to last (Jung et al., 2020). Lewin's 3-step

model holds foundational significance in managing and understanding change within groups (Memon et al., 2021).

Surmounting pressures on educators requires them to change the current status quo in the type of pedagogy used and delegate leadership roles to switch to a pedagogy that addresses these pressures (Eady et al., 2021; Farnsworth et al., 2019; Fossland & Sandvoll, 2021; Shaw et al., 2019; Soares & Galisson, 2021). This study used Lewin's change theory to select the teachers in a school district that have implemented SCL and generate research questions that reveal how this theory applies to organizational change. The study specifically addressed how educational leaders influence teachers' and students' adoption and implementation of SCL practices.

Related Literature

The literature review is structured based on the theoretical framework that underpins this study and provides the reader with a foundation for the importance of leadership during a change in pedagogical best practices. With learning environments changing and new operating guidelines instituted, many school districts across the country are grappling with how administrators and educational leaders will implement and model student-centered practices (Grissom et al., 2021). It is believed that teacher-focused teaching and learning methods alone cannot develop the skills in students needed for the 21st century (Fahnert, 2019; Tandika, 2022). As teachers must change how they deliver instruction, the educational leader's role is imperative (Greenleaf, 1998; Lewin, 1947). The related literature has been organized according to four themes: structural changes in leadership, teacher-centered learning, student-centered learning, and change to student-centered learning. Each theme described in the following section depicts specific components essential to examine how and why perceptions of implementing student-centered teaching practices cause leaders to support or resist change. Themes represent factors

(Saldaña, 2021) such as the role and impact of an educational leader on students and teachers (Crippen & Willows, 2019; Shen et al., 2020), the challenges in implementing student-centered practices (Fahnert, 2019), and the drivers for educational leadership change (Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021).

Structural Changes in Leadership

As student-centered learning becomes increasingly mainstream in the Louisiana K-12 educational system, there is a need to understand educational leaders' perceptions regarding this change in education to enhance their teachers' and students' adoption and implementation of student-centered practices. Though studies have focused on principals as individual leaders, literature now strongly suggests this role should be shared (Benoliel et al., 2021; Conan Simpson, 2021; Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood et al., 1990; Shen et al., 2020). The overwhelming load of responsibilities on principals (Sebastian et al., 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) and literature showing promising results for shared leadership roles in achieving school goals has fostered a shift in the role of an educational leader (Fossland & Sandvoll, 2021). Literature reveals that as principals share their responsibilities with academic leaders, they can have a shared cognition when presenting strategies and methods of teaching, resulting in a possible impact on the overall group’s goals (Conan Simpson, 2021; Owen & Wong, 2021). Thus, when school improvement initiatives include principals and educational leaders skilled to unite the group to a common purpose, change is more effective and longer lasting (Conan Simpson, 2021; Howard et al., 2019; Visone, 2020).

The topic regarding the complexity and increased pressure on principals’ roles for school improvements and student success has been pervasive among educational practitioners and researchers over the past 40 years (Sebastian et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell,

2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Educational leadership is known to impact the school environment as a whole (Boies & Fiset, 2019; Conan Simpson, 2021; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Sebastian et al., 2017; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020) and as such, there is a longstanding consensus that principals can only accomplish the group's purpose if they acknowledge the need to depend on others by developing leadership across the organization (Benoliel, 2020; The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 11). Research suggests that the primary driver of institutional improvement efforts at the school level is the type of leadership (Heffernan & Longmuir, 2019; Howard et al., 2019; Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021) they have. With high expectations from stakeholders for school principals to remain accountable for students' achievements (Daniel & Lei, 2019; Kılınç et al., 2022), principals alone are believed not to be able to shoulder these intensified expectations (Shen et al., 2020).

While school routines continue to be rooted in tradition, leadership in academia is now distributed among different qualified people within the school (Harris & Jones, 2019; Pont et al., 2008). The traditional role of the principal as the lone authoritative head is changing (Heffernan & Longmuir, 2019; Sugrue, 2015). This change in leadership has been quite impactful in overall teacher satisfaction and improved student performance and achievement (Conan Simpson, 2021; Shen et al., 2020; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020; Visone, 2020) as well. Principals' influence is revealed by their personality, relationship with their teachers, leadership and pedagogical knowledge, quality of support they give during academic changes, and ability to empower teachers (Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021) during times of change. Thus, a pivotal factor in affecting the climate of a school comes from those in leadership regardless of the educational level (Grissom et al., 2021). Literature shows that the relationship between leadership and teachers constitutes one of the most influential relationships within an academic environment

(Benoliel et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2019). Therefore, change is more likely to occur when principals build a robust collaborative culture within their schools (Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021; Wu et al., 2020).

Principals in the K-12 context have the role of cultivating an environment in which teachers feel supported (Ford et al., 2019) and are conducive to teaching and learning (Grissom et al., 2021). These attributes cause teachers to be more content, more apt to sustain longevity in the classroom, and to implement pedagogical best practices with fidelity (Ford et al., 2019; Scallon et al., 2021). Therefore, this can be achieved when principals share leadership roles with educational leaders who promote school-wide goals and positive behaviors (Daniel & Lei, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020a; Zhu et al., 2018). In addition, principals who acknowledge their influence on their teachers support change by having educational leaders' mentor their fellow teachers to adopt and implement a pedagogy fit for 21st-century students (Howard et al., 2019; Owen & Wong, 2021).

In times of pedagogical change, principals and their educational leaders are known to be the catalyst in impacting this change (Leithwood et al., 2004; Nguyen et al., 2020) and are crucial determinants of successful change (Alsharija & Watters, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020). Therein lies the importance of replacing previous administrative roles placed solely on the principal (Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021) with those shared and necessary for student success in the 21st century (Care et al., 2017). Thus, improving an organization requires effective leadership and strategic change (Chopra & Lichtenburg, 2019). Leaders, therefore, are encouraged to collaborate with not only their colleagues (Döös et al., 2019) but with their teachers to provide the necessary support that drives effective change and promotes the implementation of pedagogical best practices (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Though literature reflects evidence of challenges with implementation and emotional discomfort for principals and teachers who undergo frequent pedagogical changes (Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021), effective leadership during this type of change is critical in providing "the necessary guidance over time to sustain" its practical implementation (Bryk, 2010, p. 46). A principal's leadership skills can predict good teaching practices by sharing the responsibility with other teaching staff equipped with the knowledge to implement pedagogical best practices (Meyer et al., 2022). Therefore, the navigation through pedagogical changes toward those that are current and reflective of the needs of students in the 21st century (Howard et al., 2019; McPherson, 2021) can nurture educator's change toward student-centered teaching and learning environments (Perrone & Tucker, 2019) in their schools.

Leadership matters (Young et al., 2017, p. 707). This makes research on leadership more prominent in scholarly and professional pursuits in this ever-highly complex changing world (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018) requiring pedagogical changes fit for teaching and learning in the 21st century. As the distribution of leadership changes, it is suggested that the "status and normative roles of teacher leaders" be considered (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018, p. 558). There is, therefore, an agreement within the literature that the former organizational structure of leadership was not fitting the requirement of a new millennium in learning (Conan Simpson, 2021; Daniel & Lei, 2019; Iversen et al., 2015; Krahenbuhl, 2016) suggesting the need for a shared leadership within the K-12 context.

Role of Educational Leaders

Educational leaders contribute to the community of teachers as learners (Turner et al., 2018) as well as work toward the improvement of the school community (Bellibaş et al., 2021) and educational practice (Visone, 2020). Multiple researchers (Kılınç et al., 2022; Özdemir et al.,

2021; Sebastian et al., 2017; Supovitz et al., 2010; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020; Visone, 2020) suggest that K-12 schools are more effective in overall teacher and student success when the role of the principal is shared with educational leaders. For the purpose of this study, educational leaders are principals and vice principals in a shared leadership environment (Daniel & Lei, 2019), with teacher leaders who hold additional certifications to be master teachers and lead teachers who are still in the classroom teaching, but also support the development of other teachers as they become excellent educators (Conan Simpson, 2021; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). The Louisiana Department of Education (2018) describes master teachers and lead teachers as coaching teachers within their context while assisting the principal in leadership tasks that support teachers to improve student success continually.

Teacher leaders can lead schools by increasing teacher collaboration, modeling best practices, and encouraging teacher growth (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The concept of shared leadership is not new to academia. Gibb, in 1954 used the term distributed leadership to imply that no single leader should have total domination; they should share leadership with their members. Hence the literature supports that the leadership dynamic in most K-12 schools has shifted toward a shared one (Conan Simpson, 2021; Howard et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2021; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020).

The consensus in the literature is that school leaders should focus on the quality of teaching and learning to improve student outcomes (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Daniëls et al., 2019; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019; Tan et al., 2021). Therefore, the goal, mission, and purpose of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET, 2021) for over 20 years have been to provide training for K-12 principals as well as their educational leaders in states such as Louisiana on how to encourage pedagogical change, conduct compelling teacher observations

which are student-focused, and bridge any language barriers from the principal to the educational leader to the teachers. In other words, no matter what leadership role an educator holds, to be effective, they must undergo training to be experienced (Turner et al., 2018), visible (Benoliel, 2020), respected by their peers through collaboration and relationship building (Döös et al., 2019), and have norms of collegiality and trust established to cooperatively set goals and make progress (Aas et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2018; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) that leads toward change. As a result, leadership studies support the concept of shared leadership as principals distribute identified responsibilities to qualified teachers who display a natural ability to lead to ensure the school benefits, other teachers benefit, and most of all that all students benefit (Conan Simpson, 2021; Döös et al., 2019; Heffernan & Longmuir, 2019; Tan et al., 2021; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

States are implementing these teacher-leader roles and may require additional certifications (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). As previously mentioned, in Louisiana, they have established credentialing for teacher leadership roles such as mentor teacher, content leader, master teacher, and most recently, executive master teacher (Louisiana Department of Education, 2018). Additionally, the Louisiana Department of Education believes that this credentialing reflects the ongoing commitment of states to support and develop high-quality teaching by providing nominated teachers with ongoing in-person training throughout the academic year, concluded by assessments that prove these teachers are worthy of participating in leadership roles within their schools. Education is suggested as “an integral part of the American social process, " reflecting society's essential characteristics (Martell, 2015, p. 112). Thus, educational leaders are the influencers when there is a change in a pedagogy (Nguyen et al., 2020) that equips students with needed 21st-century skills (Duke et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2020).

Pedagogical changes in education, such as those moving toward those with a student focus, aim for a change in teachers' practices (Bonner et al., 2020; Duke et al., 2021). Thus, delegating administrative roles to qualified teachers is impactful by providing support and additional professional development (Aas et al., 2020; Owen & Wong, 2021) to ensure a teacher's continual growth (Conan Simpson, 2021; Visone, 2020) during pedagogical changes. How principals construct their leadership (how effective they are) toward teachers translates to the behaviors directed at and observed by their teachers (Boies & Fiset, 2019). This is key in that a potential relationship exists between the cognition of principals regarding leadership and the actual behaviors they demonstrate (Aas et al., 2020; Boies & Fiset, 2019; Meyer et al., 2022). Therefore, when K-12 schools implement change, principals must understand the need for change to convey the reason to their teachers (Da'as et al., 2021). In essence, change is a top-down dissemination of knowledge and behaviors observed from the bottom up (Conan Simpson, 2021).

Even when schools and their members share a belief, there is still the factor that a conglomeration of shared knowledge and skills is present, all of which are impacted by the interaction of each member within the whole (Bandura, 2000). Hence, the research done by Bandura has shown that when there is a high perceived collective efficacy and an increase in motivation derived from the actions of their leader, there will be more significant investment from those in the group as well as a higher tendency for them to remain a member of the group regardless of impediments (Koskela & Paloniemi, 2022). Therefore, the educational leader's responsibility is to reduce hurdles so teachers stay on course even when pedagogical change is inevitable (Crosby, 2021a; Ortan et al., 2021).

Leadership has been described as a "process of morality to the degree that leaders engage with followers based on shared motives, values, and goals…" (Burns, 1978, p. 36). The importance of this type of engagement between leadership and teachers produces a greater collective efficacy within the school as leaders' model positive behaviors through instructional and staff development (McKeown et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2022). This interaction is directly related to how leadership encourages collaboration and the reality of how teachers collaborate or if they do (Meyer et al., 2022). Be it that schools are organizational settings that are comprised of unique cultural norms, team collaboration supported by school leaders leads to member satisfaction (Rosenfield et al., 2018) and overall has been shown to directly impact a teachers' performance (Boies & Fiset, 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Da'as et al., 2021; Mestry & Govindasamy, 2021; Meyer et al., 2022). Consequently, the shared or distributed leadership perspective continues to be implemented, ensuring leaders develop the theoretical and practical knowledge that leads to change within their daily practice (Aas et al., 2020; Heffernan & Longmuir, 2019).

Since educational leaders are known to be change agents whom their peers respect, making school improvements and school growth a possibility (Aas et al., 2020; Crippen & Willows, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020), it must be noted that teacher collaboration does indeed promote student achievement (Daly et al., 2021; Grissom et al., 2021) and overall impacts goals aimed at pedagogical change. Educational leaders should reflect a spirit of change (Nguyen et al., 2020). This can only occur if leaders understand what pedagogies, such as those with a student-centered focus, look like from the basis of their being a learner and an educator (Marshall, 2013; McNeill et al., 2018). Thus, educational leaders, teachers, and students must be

equipped with the skills necessary for lifelong learning (Taranto & Buchanan, 2020) in a 21st-century transforming world.

Leaders as Servants. It is suggested that a servant leader is an agent of change (Tanno & Banner, 2018). Robert Greenleaf coined the term servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011), which implies that a servant leader is a servant first and that one does not look at what benefits them before looking at what is beneficial to all (Tanno & Banner, 2018). It is those being served by the leader which is the main focus (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 15), and this type of focus places community and teamwork above the hierarchal mode of the previous thought of leader, allowing others to be part of the decision-making process (Crippen & Willows, 2019).

During his time in managerial and teaching positions, Greenleaf et al. (2002) saw formidable obstacles which could stand in the way of allowing a leader to be a servant first. He saw this as a problem of mindsets. Greenleaf (1970) stated that though knowledge may be power without the willingness "and the release from inhibiting mindsets," this knowledge may not be used by individuals (p. 24). From Greenleaf's (1970) original writings, ten characteristics were evident of servant-leaders within an educational setting: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and community building. These ten characteristics establish the connection between teacher and servant leadership (Greenleaf et al., 2002). If change is a constant factor within education, then an educational leader with the attributes of servant leadership can nurture professional growth in their colleagues (Greenleaf, 2003; Lewin, 1948) and, thus, promote change (Crippen & Willows, 2019). This is pertinent to this study regarding the change process from teacher-centered practices to those that support student-centered practices.

Leadership Impact on Teachers

Observing a principal's behaviors is key to how and if a teacher follows (Conan Simpson, 2021). Thus, a teacher's buy-in is imperative if the change is to occur (Byrne et al., 2018; Conan Simpson, 2021). As such, educational leaders are critical in improving instructional confidence, making buy-in to the vision of change more likely (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). Therefore, the direct impact educational leaders have on teachers is immense and ultimately determines the output of teachers (Campbell et al., 2019; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019) as their needs are being met and as they are regarded as important voices to the needs and concerns of students (Boies & Fiset, 2019). As human capital managers (Belay et al., 2021), principals must be fully committed to the change process (Gebretsadik, 2022) and demonstrate positive behaviors throughout the process to see results within their schools.

Schools with a leadership model resembling distributed leadership facilitate servant leadership behaviors that encourage them but cause a mutual embracing of change (Meyer et al., 2022; van Dierendonck, 2011). When group members engage in everyday activities and discussions, they can better help each other and share vital information that can contribute toward the change goal (Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021; Heystek, 2022; Luguetti et al., 2019). As such, the role of the educational leader is established within the literature as being the agent of change (Lewin, 1947). However, this depends on how they share information, how they provide opportunities for skill development, and if they reinforce the change required (Burnes, 2020), such as when changing pedagogy from one with a teacher focus to one that is student-focused. Pedagogy is a mutual responsibility of all individuals in a school (Grice, 2019). Thus, leadership that gives pedagogical agency to others, such as that in distributed leadership, enables change (Grice, 2019).

As an essential factor in the concept of leaders being agents of change, the totality of an individual's spirituality can also be associated with an agent of change within organizations (Wang et al., 2019). Studies on workplace spirituality awareness contribute to employees being satisfied in their jobs, are said to have higher productivity and creativity, and rise to leadership positions more quickly (Pokhariyal, 2020). This concept is vital because the literature suggests that the principal's role should be shared (Grice, 2019). Leadership with spiritual characteristics contributes to uniting individuals and creating a community within an organization that takes on shared traditions, values, and beliefs, ultimately creating a harmonious work environment (Hunsaker, 2022). This whole group environment depends on their willingness to pull through when change is evident (Crosby, 2021a, p. 57; Lewin, 1947). For individuals to accept change and be able to contribute to making it successful, there must be an overall understanding of how the change benefits them (Lewin, 1948; Nguyen et al., 2020). As leadership aligns with the knowledge of the importance of their faculty's spirituality (Hunsaker, 2022; Pokhariyal, 2020), they can focus on the specific internal and external issues that challenge the change needed (Lewin, 1947).

Though the enactment of instructional change in a school setting is ultimately conducted by teachers making them critical to reform initiatives (Bonner et al., 2020), competent leadership beginning with the principal, is necessary to ethically establish other leadership roles (Tanno & Banner, 2018) within a school. Good leadership improves a teacher's motivation to accept change and drive toward improvement within their setting (Meyer et al., 2022; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Hence, as employees perceive their workplace, they perceive their well-being (Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, fostering a school environment where its educational leaders share their values and norms is thought to positively impact teachers and students (Tan et al.,

2021; Turner et al., 2018) and reduce any restraining forces in accepting the change process (Lewin, 1947) from teacher-centered to student-centered practices. With this in mind, principals must still understand pedagogies to achieve state-wide standards (Tintoré et al., 2022). That is why educational leaders in K-12 public schools are changing to learning environments most conducive to reflecting the constant demands and changes within their field and society (Harris & Jones, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020a).

An educational leader must understand all possible hindrances that may arise from their teachers, students, parents, and the communities they serve when implementing pedagogical changes (Grice, 2019). One such possible hindrance is the school climate. It is suggested to be a vital aspect of the teaching and learning process that can either promote student academic growth and professional performance or hinder it (Dutta & Sahney, 2022; Mousena & Raptis, 2021). School climate is defined as how participants' interactions with pedagogical events and phenomena are experienced within the school (Mousena & Raptis, 2021). It additionally identifies the perceptions of the overall school environment from the bases of students and teachers (Kupchik et al., 2022). Therefore, leadership that fosters a positive school climate favors teachers' professionalization and promotes student-centered approaches (Mousena & Raptis, 2021).

Educational leaders’ facilitation of collaborative and professional learning communities causes teachers to grow and learn how to implement SCL (Grissom et al., 2021). This teaching environment pays mind to their teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic needs. It establishes an effective rewards system to encourage employee satisfaction (Manzoor et al., 2021), moving the group toward change (Crosby, 2021a). This, in turn, encourages teachers to invest more in themselves investing more into their student's learning (Carvalho & Santos, 2021; McPherson, 2021), the

ultimate goal of academia. As was stated earlier, the impact leadership has on teachers is multi-dimensional. Yet, when it is effective, it can play a significant role in teachers' professional growth (McKeown et al., 2019; Morris et al., 2020), ultimately ensuring they accept the change from teacher-centered practices toward student-centered practices. Unsurprisingly, that is why educational leaders must display a sense of comradeship; they must be transparent and vocal on expectations and goals while gaining the trust of teachers to accept the vision of the school (Campbell et al., 2019; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Meyer et al., 2022; Supovitz et al., 2010) and the need to embrace the change to student-centered practices.

Research alludes to the notion that teachers have a relationship with educational leaders because they are seen as equal (Fossland & Sandvoll, 2021). Thus, teachers can freely share pedagogical issues, allowing direct assistance in bringing forth necessary change (Visone, 2020). In the first phase of the change process, unfreezing tends to be the most challenging and stressful (Lewin, 1947). How educational leaders reinforce the need for change and verbalize why teacher-centered teaching and learning cannot continue if they are to prepare students for the 21st century must occur (Pada & Doctor, 2020). A change in mindset is needed during organizational change (Bligh et al., 2018) when the organization is moving toward a student-centered strategic, and proactive form of learning (Eady et al., 2021; Plotinsky, 2022). However, within this change, it is vital to note that it is not just the teachers that need equipping with new skills; students also require it (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Lo, 2021).

Leadership Impact on Students

Empirical evidence has been established in the literature that educational leaders make a difference in student outcomes (Tan et al., 2021) not only through their influence but by fostering an effective teaching and learning environment (Conan Simpson, 2021; Daniel & Lei,

2019; Hallinger et al., 2017; Kılınç et al., 2022; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; McPherson, 2021; Sebastian et al., 2017; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020). Even in challenging contexts, teacher quality and student performance levels increase when educational leaders promote a positive learning climate (Benoliel, 2020; Khanal et al., 2021). That is why when leaders demonstrate the combination of instructional management, internal relations, organizational management, administration, and external relations behaviors, there is an increase in student academic outcomes (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). The combination of skills and leadership qualities fosters this positive student outcome (Robinson & Gray, 2019). Therefore, the consensus in school leadership research is said to increase students' academic achievement linked to schools with distributed leadership roles (Sebastian et al., 2017; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020). It is reported that "the more willing principals are to spread leadership around," the more impact they have on students and the more they ultimately learn (The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 10) and embrace changes in how they learn.

The key to impacting students well beyond the school (Shen et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2021) is how educational leaders, as a group, impact their school climate (Sebastian et al., 2017). When looking at a productive school climate, the role of an educational leader is one where they "promote teachers' and students' engagement around learning" (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 92; Robinson & Gray, 2019). When perceived to be positive, the school climate causes students' academic outcomes to increase as their engagement in class increases (Konold et al., 2018) and is said to be impossible outside a suitable school climate (Mousena & Raptis, 2021). Therefore, depending on the influence within a student's learning community or the climate of the school as the student perceives it, it can determine the rate of absenteeism and feelings of safety (Benoliel, 2020; Dutta & Sahney, 2022; Kim & Gentle-Genitty), as well as their overall academic and

social behavior in school (Kupchik et al., 2022). These factors lead to a student's buy-in of student-centered practices within their learning environment (Shaw et al., 2019). As leaders shape and set teaching and learning expectations, their leadership practices influence pupils' performance (González-Falcón et al., 2020; Robinson & Gray, 2019) and perception of the school's climate, reinforcing a student's buy-in of SCL (Shaw et al., 2019).

Such an environment also has the potential to impact both parents and the community (Mousena & Raptis, 2021; Tan et al., 2021). Both families and the community need to be included in the collaborative process of understanding why pedagogical change is required to buy into the goal of change (Tan et al., 2021). Therefore, educational leaders provide a bridge (Ackles, 2018) for parents to be active in their schools and have consequently been seen worldwide as beneficial (González-Falcón et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021a) when changing to student-centered practices. With this in mind, the definition of school-community collaboration is a process between schools, parents, and communities working together to accomplish mutual goals with a specific focus on student learning and development (Kim & Gentle-Genitty, 2020). This type of collaboration adds to the favorable climate of a school (González-Falcón et al., 2020). It reinforces the teacher buy-in (Byrne et al., 2018) of the needed change of implementing student-centered teaching and learning practices school-wide.

How schools are organized and operate affects instructional changes required in the classroom (Bryk, 2010; Peurach et al., 2019). The NIET (2021) asserts that principals of K-12 schools are the leaders of instructional change in schools. However, the lack of context-specific understanding of teaching practices, such as using SCL, has brought forth challenges in how teachers develop skills and how this translates to student success in an SCL classroom (Baker & Robinson, 2018; Kim et al., 2019). That is why professional development is necessary (Lunn

Brownlee et al., 2019; Peurach et al., 2019) to ensure that both educational leaders and teachers understand what SCL looks like and sounds like when teaching and learning (McPherson, 2021).

Teacher-Centered Learning

Traditional learning also termed teacher-centered learning (TCL) or conventional education (Raja & Khan, 2018), is a teaching process adhered to a fixed curriculum and a learning process that emphasizes basic skills (Spooner, 2015). The teacher holds power as the deliverer of knowledge (Estes, 2004; Iversen et al., 2015), also known as a knowledge transmitter, while the student is the receiver of knowledge (Jonassen, 1991). Consistent throughout the literature, this type of learning environment is one where the teacher is thought of as knowing best what the students need, more so than the students do (Dong et al., 2019; Dunbar & Yadav, 2022). Teachers are said to dictate student outcomes (Iversen et al., 2015), and therein lies the thought that students are passive learners (Krahenbuhl, 2016; Raja & Khan, 2018). In TCL, the teaching style is well-defined (Jonassen, 1991). Teachers are responsible for setting the objectives students must meet per the curriculum and planning set activities designed to meet the learner's needs (Pedersen & Liu, 2003).

Teacher-centered learning begins with the teacher lecturing (Jonassen, 1991; Spooner, 2015); however, only five percent of lecture information is retained by the student in this type of learning environment (Spooner, 2015) and is reflected by their grades on the final exams (Baker & Robinson, 2018). Though the focus is for students to grow intellectually, students do not experience the actual education process. Thus, student self-reliance is not considered (Estes, 2004, p. 147). Ultimately, in the teacher-focused traditional learning environment, the teacher's role determines how and what a student would learn, how they would use the curriculum to

influence students, and assess understanding based on external requirements (Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014).

Recent studies show that this style of teaching is outdated (Baker & Robinson, 2018; Hannafin et al., 2014; Iversen et al., 2015) and is not conducive to the skills students need and are required to have for the 21st-century working world (Byrne et al., 2018; Howard et al., 2019; Onurkan & Özer, 2017). Moreover, educators think traditional passive instruction gives "the appearance but not the substance of genuine learning" (Gutek, 2011, p. 350). It is concluded that understanding change is necessary to begin the process of organizational change, which leads to an understanding that old ways of doing things are no longer effective (Lewin, 1947). Therefore, if there is to be a change in pedagogical mindset from teacher-centered to student-centered, a principal must remain mindful of how they as leaders are perceived and experienced (Farnsworth et al., 2019; Heystek, 2022), not only by their teachers but by their students (Shaw et al., 2019).

Literature reveals some disputed agreement as some researchers believe that as approaches to learning expand and as technology enhances the field of academia, disciplined methods, such as those that are student-centered, are indeed needed to prepare students for these societal changes (Carvalho & Santos, 2021; Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Onurkan & Özer, 2017). However, others see the traditional, teacher-centered teaching approach as still thriving in many core disciplines with resistance from teachers to change (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Eronen & Kärnä, 2018; Krahenbuhl, 2016). Some teachers do not actively try incorporating student-centered teaching methods into their teaching style as they hold fast to the traditional teacher-centered way of teaching (Raja & Khan, 2018). The change from this teacher-centered approach to learning that involves the student in co-creating content to continue down the path of

innovation (Iversen et al., 2015) has gained momentum worldwide (Shaw et al., 2019; Sormunen et al., 2020).

Educational Reform

For the past 35 years, historical accounts of educational reform undergird the premise that the very foundation of the traditional way of teaching has begun to erode the educational safeguards of the American way of life, leading to the fact that schools are not preparing students beyond a K-12 education (Kaput, 2018; The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Shuffelton, 2020). Once protected by the leaders in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation, these educational safeguards have begun to be challenged by a competitive world, revealing mediocrity in American schools (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The April 30, 1983, address made by President Ronald Reagan propelled a movement of change for the public school system (Kaput, 2018). President Reagan suggested in A Nation at Risk Report (ANAR) that education was perhaps the problem for the current economic state of affairs (Shuffelton, 2020). Despite President Reagan's belief, it was suggested through the rhetoric within the ANAR that there was indeed a need for a course change for K-12 schools in the United States. (Shuffelton, 2020).

From that time forward, the educational landscape has seen President Bush’s No Child Left Behind initiative replaced with the Every Student Succeeds Act to President Obama’s Race to the Top Grant (Kaput, 2018). All of these aimed to improve the eroding educational system stuck on the traditional teacher-focused teaching style. As such, the ESSA is known to have two goals (Young et al., 2017) which undergird the reason for the change to student-centered practice within the K-12 teaching and learning environment. The first is college and career-focused, requiring states to align their educational programs with college and career-ready standards

(Malin et al., 2017; Young et al., 2017), and the second extends the federal focus on equity by providing resources for poor students, students of color, English learners, and students with disabilities (Young et al., 2017). The role of NIET (2021) upon the passage of ESSA in states such as Louisiana has been to embed into K-12 education a means of sustaining and expanding initiatives that support teacher leadership and keep educator effectiveness at the forefront of the national agenda. The starting point, however, circles back to a student's K-12 21st-century education and its importance in preparing students for the college and workforce transition upon graduation (Malin et al., 2017). This, however, can only be accomplished by changing the status quo and communicating the vision of why switching to a student-focused teaching and learning environment would be beneficial (Lewin, 1947).

The mentality that once permeated the very essence of the American public school system, teacher-centered teaching, and learning, has become to many archaic and in need of reform, providing students with skills needed for the ever-evolving working world (Cyphert et al., 2019; Kaput, 2018). However, skills known to be developed in teacher-centered classrooms, such as good citizenry, are still essential and are needed for students to be successful in today's economy (Silliman & Schleifer, 2018). Businesses over the last nine years have emphatically voiced for students entering the workforce to be equipped with soft skills, also known as 21st-century skills (Woods-Groves et al., 2019), such as but not limited to work ethic, accountability, self-motivation (Kaput, 2018), teamwork, and problem-solving skills (Dean & East, 2019; Woods-Groves et al., 2019). Additionally, it is estimated that approximately 60% of job openings require a basic understanding of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) literacy, with only 28% of businesses reporting that half of the entry-level workforce possess some of these essential STEM skills for a 21st-century workforce (Business Roundtable, 2017).

Thus, as articulated throughout research, the means of equipping individuals with these skills is through a pedagogy that has removed its focus on teaching and learning from the teacher and placed it on the students (Cyphert et al., 2019; Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014; Shaw et al., 2019; Sormunen et al., 2020). This type of student-driven learning environment additionally addresses gender gaps in STEM-related fields by targeting females when taught in K-12 (Lie et al., 2019).

Although public schools are likely to be seen as antiquated and broken (Baker & Robinson, 2018), research indicates that it is accomplishing the goal of providing students with a standardized education (Kaput, 2018). This, however, has not been seen as beneficial, as noted in 1922 by the English teacher John L. Haney who wrote that a path of standardized curricula is one with uniformity and for education, it is likely the handmaiden of mediocrity (pp. 215, 218). Standardized education is one where curricula control students, tests, and mandates (Elliott et al., 2014). This environment is not conducive to supporting students' and teachers' abilities to be reflective, imaginative thinkers, creative problem solvers, and active citizens (Elliott et al., 2014; Sormunen et al., 2020). Recent reform efforts such as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS; Next Generation Science Standards Lead States, 2013) require educational leaders to understand science practices if they are to provide feedback that displays an understanding of pedagogical instruction (McNeill et al., 2018).

Though some teachers see the need for standardization in schools, many are learning how to balance federal mandates of standardization with a dedication to providing authentic and meaningful learning experiences for their students (Lindstrom, 2018). Overall, the mentality on how students are educated needs reform for educators and stakeholders to move toward the fact that every student has a unique background, ability, and interest (Shaw et al., 2019;

Vongkulluksn et al., 2018) regarding education. Teacher leaders can therefore take the initiative to adapt current best practices to accommodate reform requirements, impacting teaching and learning practices (Belay et al., 2021; Heffernan & Longmuir, 2019). To move classrooms toward a student focus, active-learning pedagogies intended to engage students in constructing their knowledge (Connell et al., 2016; Eronen & Kärnä, 2018; Shaw et al., 2019) are in stark contrast to teacher-centered practices (Wilson et al., 2019).

Student-Centered Learning

Student-centered learning (SCL) is not a theory of teaching but of learning, precisely one where the student owns their learning and motivation to learn (Harju & Åkerblom, 2017; Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Spooner, 2015). With its focus on the construction of knowledge by the learner, SCL is known to work best when the learning environment is designed to challenge thinking and expertise (both present and past), all of which encourage learning and motivation (Estes, 2004; Spooner, 2015). There has been an emergence of research over the past few decades that shows SCL, as compared to TCL, as having a higher degree of academic performance (Eronen & Kärnä, 2018; Shaw et al., 2019; Wang & Zhang, 2019). In fact, within this type of learning environment, also known as a deep approach to learning, students are equipped with the skills needed to find and improve the meaning of what they study (Muianga et al., 2018; Wang & Zhang, 2019). Therefore, it is plausible to think that within an SCL classroom, students can gain a more profound sense of learning and understand the applicability of what and why they are learning (Eronen & Kärnä, 2018; Ghani et al., 2021; Lo, 2021; Muianga et al., 2018).

A relationship exists between the student's choice of what and how they learn and how they connect learning within an SCL environment to real-world experiences (Eronen & Kärnä, 2018; Harju & Åkerblom, 2017; Keiler, 2018). The distinguishing factor between TCL and SCL

is that in SCL, the students get to participate in everyday experiences and develop a real-world perspective (Hannafin et al., 2014; Schmid et al., 2022) through the discovery and construction of knowledge in a meaningful context and then share this knowledge by engaging in social interactions (Onurkan & Özer, 2017). SCL is learning through exploration, holding the idea of a student being a self-regulated learner (Bernard et al., 2021; Duffy & Tobias, 2009; Slavin, 2000), and placing the student in a more active and self-directed role (Kim & Davies, 2014). Unlike the surface approach to learning, TCL, SCL provides deep understanding allowing students to develop critical thinking resulting in classroom discussions that are more precise and elaborate due to the analytical thinking this type of learning environment encourages (Schmid et al., 2022; Tal & Tsaushu, 2018; Wang & Zhang, 2019). According to the literature, student-centered practices in education and instruction are increasing exponentially for both the educator as a learner and the leader as a learner (AACTE & Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010; McPherson, 2021). Two studies conducted within two years of each other support that the teaching and learning of skills gained in a student-centered classroom are linked to positive results in students' end-of-year academic performances (Woods-Groves & Choi, 2017; Woods-Groves et al., 2019).

SCL is described as a form of learning which keeps students more "physically involved through discovery, inquiry, and collaboration" and is looked at as the "best approach for all situations" (Krahenbuhl, 2016, p. 99; Schmid et al., 2022). This learning environment attracts and maintains students' attention (Serban & Vescan, 2019) and cultivates opportunities for students to pursue the topics they are interested in (Massiah & James, 2020). Additionally, SCL practices encourage students to perform above the required performance needed throughout the learning process (Bautista et al., 2018; Emery et al., 2020). As a pedagogy, it places students

first, increasing student success through various opportunities to experience multiple learning styles (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020; Schmid et al., 2022).

For students to be effective learners and embrace the exploration of new material (Bautista et al., 2018; Zvoch et al., 2021), the climate of the learning environment must allow students to feel safe (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020). Safe school environments can produce class activities that will enable students to apply content learned in an inquiry-based practice found in a student-centered environment which positions students as active agents in their learning process (Zvoch et al., 2021). For this reason, states such as Louisiana have implemented student-centered curriculums in which students can cultivate knowledge and skills to succeed in college or in any professional career upon graduating (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.). Ultimately, SCL is said to improve learning within a classroom setting as a student's motivation and willingness to learn are driven by prior knowledge and the opportunity to construct new knowledge (Soubra et al., 2022). Therefore, educational leaders must emphasize continuous learning and growth for teachers and students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022) to activate student motivation and willingness to learn, which improves the school's overall climate (Mousena & Raptis, 2021; Shaw et al., 2019).

Tenets of Student-Centered Learning

Dewey's concept of "learning by doing" circa 1915 stemmed from the belief that to produce pupil understanding, there must be opportunities for students to engage in hands-on activities (Cremin, 1959). Dewey believed that this type of learning would have educated people who would inevitably be agents of constructive social change within the societies in which they can demonstrate their knowledge, making the schools that educate them part of needed reform (Cremin, 1959). Like Dewey, Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian educator, observed that children

absorb knowledge from their surroundings, producing an environment conducive to learning by doing (American Montessori Society, n.d.). Dewey's and Montessori's outlook on how students learn reflects a student-centered practice where students are entrusted with their learning, resulting in their engagement in this educational environment (Samaranayake, 2020).

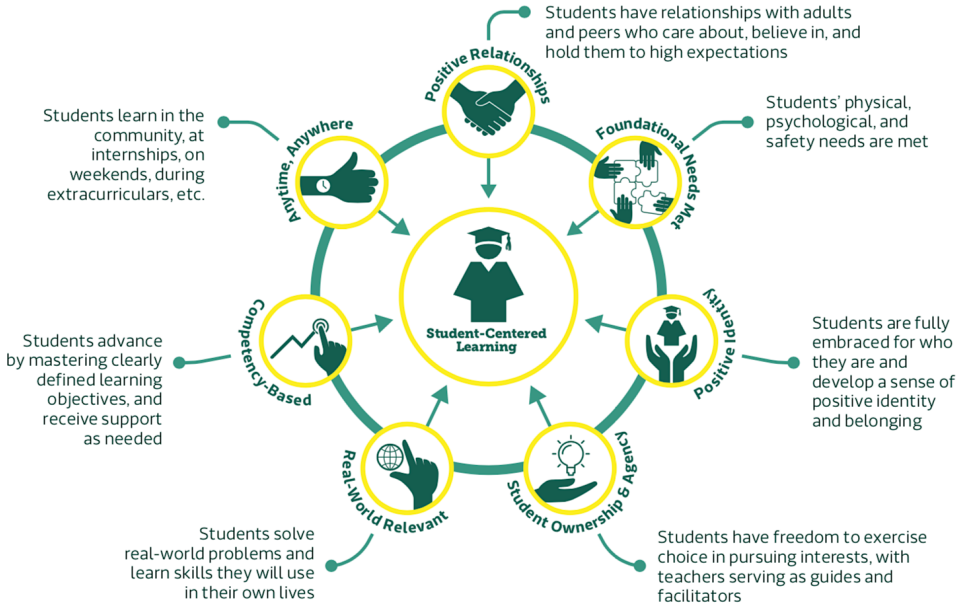
During the 1990s, there was a resurgence of an older teaching method and learning absent of formal instruction, student-centered learning (Hannafin et al., 2014). This resurgence was due to curricular educational policies nationally and worldwide pressing for effective student-centered practice to promote student reflection and stimulate decision-making (Farias et al., 2018) in students for the 21st-century world (Cyphert et al., 2019; Dean & East, 2019). In fact, over the last decade, student-centered learning (SCL) has widened the trajectory of the classroom landscape to produce students able to engage in the 21st-century workforce (Dean & East, 2019; Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Massiah & James, 2020). Student-centered learning, often used as an umbrella term (Baeten et al., 2016), encompasses terms such as open learning, self-choice learning, spontaneous learning, resource-based learning, self-directed learning (Hannafin et al., 2014), learner-centered and learner-driven learning (Herranen et al., 2018) and design-based learning (Vongkulluksn et al., 2018). It has evolved to include the foundation of STEM, or science, technology, engineering, and math (Lo, 2021; Lynch et al., 2019; Vongkulluksn et al., 2018), as well as project-based learning (Keiler, 2018), and its implementation is encouraged for all teachers across subject disciplines (Herranen et al., 2018; McPherson, 2021). Research shows that when teachers move away from the traditional textbook-based instruction relying on memorization and move to student-centered approaches, which develop critical thinking skills, students benefit from the conceptual understanding of science topics such as density (Zvoch et al., 2021). Through experiential learning, professional skills such as critical problem-solving are

fostered in students equipping them with the skills they need for their future careers and as members of the professional workforce (Dean & East, 2019; Fahnert, 2019; Raja & Khan, 2018). It is important to restate that the literature suggests that when students are actively involved in student-centered classrooms, they have a greater conceptual understanding (Trinidad, 2020), resulting in higher learning gains (Connell et al., 2016; Shaw et al., 2019). Though different labels have been used to reflect the SCL approach, they all share some core design principles. The primary focus is in, on, and with the students (Bremner, 2021; Eronen & Kärnä, 2018).

Within the literature, seven central tenets emerge and thus build the foundation for SCL as seen in Figure 1: (1) students build relationships, (2) they have a choice and a voice, (3) there is a competency-based progression, (4) teachers remain vigilant of monitoring student needs (Herranen et al., 2018; Keiler, 2018; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Lo, 2021) (5) real-world problem solving, (6) positive identity, and (7) learning anytime, anywhere (Kaput, 2018). This learning approach educates students in a digitally literate world, prepared, equipped, and aware of the moxie needed for future success (Carvalho & Santos, 2021). It is also valuable when engaging diverse groups of students struggling in a traditional science classroom (Zvoch et al., 2021). This learning environment allows students to build their inquiry skills while participating actively. As a result, they are known to decrease the rate of dropping, withdrawing from, and failing student-driven courses (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020).

Figure 1

Seven Principles of Student-Centered Learning



Note. This figure shows a collaboration of academic research and information from students and educators on their perceptions of student-centered learning. These seven principles of student-centered learning were meant to serve as a resource in academia as they integrate student-centered learning. Adapted from *"Evidence for Student-Centered Learning,"* by K. Kaput, 2018, p. 7 (https://www.educationevolving.org/content/evidence-for-student-centered-learning). Copyright 2022 by Education Evolving. In the public domain.

Student-Centered Learning in the Classroom

Students play a very active role when engaged in a student-centered learning (SCL) environment (Bremner, 2021, 2022; Estes, 2004; Hannafin et al., 2014; Harju & Åkerblom, 2017) by being allowed to choose educational aspects within the curricular framework which intentionally result in education being relevant and meaningful to them (Harju & Åkerblom, 2017; Iversen et al., 2015). SCL provides conceptual scaffolding to assist students in determining

how new content can be organized (Farias et al., 2018) while promoting the skills needed for success in the 21st century, irrespective of the student's direction upon graduating high school (Carvalho & Santos, 2021; Keiler, 2018). Therefore, the approach of SCL facilitates a collaborative learning environment (Herranen et al., 2018; Lehesvuori et al., 2018) where the promotion of essential critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication (Keiler, 2018; Lehesvuori et al., 2018; Lo, 2021; Raja & Khan, 2018) and peer learning skills (Ghani et al., 2021) is advantageous to students being able to develop new skills while gaining the perspective that acquiring knowledge is a lifelong process (Spooner, 2015, p. 78). The main objective of SCL is to enrich a student's journey of becoming lifelong learners (Sekulich, 2018) as they experience the value of enlightening their understanding through the perspective of others (Ackles, 2018).

In the student-centered learning (SCL) classroom, teachers encourage learners to learn from and with each other (Bautista et al., 2018; Eronen & Kärnä, 2018) as they continue to learn in their unique way (Lee & Branch, 2018). It is suggested that although the traditional teacher-centered model of teaching and learning works for some students, it was never designed to work for every student (Esdal, 2017). That is why in an SCL environment, teachers support disciplined learning by engaging with students while the students are involved in authentic, real-world work (Lehesvuori et al., 2018; Raja & Khan, 2018). Encouragement and collaboration ultimately build an iterative culture in their classrooms (Grossman et al., 2019). Further, the SCL classroom allows students to improve their intrinsic motivation toward learning, fostering resourcefulness (Eronen & Kärnä, 2018) and confidence in goal achievement (Ghani et al., 2021). The student-centered classroom brings forth opportunities for the students to build confidence in how they comprehend a course, such as music in its technical and contextual aspects, thus allowing

students to function at a high level of problem-solving understanding (Ackles, 2018; Bautista et al., 2018;).

When teachers support student autonomy within an SCL environment, students learn to manage time while working on activities that produce improved concentration (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). The student's attention is captivated and, therefore, able to gain a first-hand perspective on the course matter they are engaged in (Lehesvuori et al., 2018; Lyles & Oli, 2020). Additionally, this type of learning environment allows students to be equipped with how to transfer what they have learned and apply these skills to experiences within new environments (Ackles, 2018). SCL practices such as STEM improve students' instructional quality (Lynch et al., 2019). The results are that students gain critical disciplinary skills such as inquiry, argumentation, and proof (Lynch et al., 2019) along with the perspective of what it would feel like once they enter the workforce (Dean & East, 2019; Raja & Khan, 2018) as they are allowed to learn through application and action in a student-centered classroom (Bremner, 2022). Therefore, when students are allowed to tackle real-world problems collaboratively, they gain the perspective of a working professional (Dean & East, 2019; Fahnert, 2019) and can freely ask why, when, and how to solve real-world problems (Ackles, 2018; Herranen et al., 2018; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012).

However, for an effective student-centered environment to thrive, research shows that students need prior knowledge and experience (Baeten et al., 2016; Hannafin et al., 2014; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Martell, 2015), as do teachers (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Iversen et al., 2015; Lo, 2021). In this teaching and learning environment, time is vitally important for educators and students to learn how SCL works (Lynch et al., 2019). Both teachers and students need the time to practice the process of an SCL pedagogy as it can be time-consuming and require additional resources, which are not always readily available to schools (Fisher, 2021). That is why the

support of educational leaders is highly recommended within the literature during the process of changing toward student-centered practices (Herranen et al., 2018; Howard et al., 2019; McPherson, 2021) within the teaching and learning environment in K-12 schools. Sixty-eight percent of teachers in one study emphasized the need for teamwork while understanding mobile learning with a student-centered focus (Chen & Tsai, 2021). However, scholars find student-centered instruction as a means of improved instructional quality that cultivates skills for the 21st century (Cheng & Chen, 2022; Tandika, 2022).

Student-centered teaching and learning environments produce skills valued by the business community and society (Dean & East, 2019; Esdal, 2017; Tandika, 2022). Thus, educational leaders have the opportunity to identify limitations to encourage a change in this type of learning environment. Ample studies have shown that an educational leader's role can facilitate proper teacher implementation and student success within an SCL classroom (Bonner et al., 2020; Bremner, 2022; Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Keiler, 2018). Therefore, educators need to change their traditional mindset on teaching and learning and develop competencies with a focus on the student through strategies for continuing professional development in the context of student-centered practices (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014).

For practical implementation, leadership support is required (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Heffernan & Longmuir, 2019; Lo, 2021; McPherson, 2021). Furthermore, it is plausible that when educational leaders reinforce their goals with the 'why' change is needed (Lewin, 1947), such as developing 21st-century skills in students (Woods-Groves & Choi, 2017), the process of changing from TCL to SCL will establish the new status quo (Hussain et al., 2018) and therefore allow educational leaders to support their staff resulting in them being confident and comfortable (McPherson, 2021). The implementation of SCL in K-12 classrooms can provide the foundation

from which 21st-century students build skills for their future (Carvalho & Santos, 2021; Dean & East, 2019; Lo, 2021) while their teachers assist in the process (Krahenbuhl, 2016). The growth and stability in today's schools depend on educational leaders encouraging the implementation of SCL (McPherson, 2021) through distributed leadership (Nguyen & Hunter, 2018) and the student's buy-in of learning in this type of environment (Herranen et al., 2018).

Challenges of Implementation

The notion of shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered practices has not been without encountering misunderstandings of what it looks like by teachers and educational leaders (Krahenbuhl, 2016; Martell, 2015; Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Serrano Corkin et al., 2019). The change required in student-centered learning (SCL) environments is sometimes difficult for teachers to do (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022), and though asked to change to student-centered practices, teachers persist in teacher-centered roles in their classrooms (Keiler, 2018; Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Raja & Khan, 2018). The reason for this is that most K-12 educators, skilled in their subject discipline (Kulgemeyer et al., 2020; Lo, 2021; Lunn Brownlee et al., 2019), find the implementation of an SCL environment challenging without training (Bremner, 2022; Serrano Corkin et al., 2019). Despite its benefit, this lack causes resistance to change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Serrano Corkin et al., 2019).

Research (Browes, 2021; Gemmink et al., 2021; Lunn Brownlee et al., 2019) has shown that regardless of a teacher's experience with a pedagogy, if they felt administrative pressure regarding student performance expectations on tests, they hesitated to implement that pedagogy, as they placed content coverage above the required suggestion of saying SCL implementation in their classrooms (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022). Additionally, due to teachers' professional practice having been developed by their pedagogical training during their schooling, it is believed that

both can hinder teachers from changing to SCL practices within their classrooms (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Koh, 2018). However, this is true for teachers and educational leaders (McPherson, 2021).

The factor of fear has also been noted to hinder teachers' adoption of SCL due to a lack of knowledge, lack of personal experience in an SCL environment (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022), and due to lack of support from their educational leaders (Bonner et al., 2020; Keiler, 2018; Koh, 2018; Lo, 2021). Furthermore, pedagogies are believed to affect teachers' identities when their old identity is not allowed to transition to a newly required state (Gemmink et al., 2021; Keiler, 2018). Therefore, when needed to implement SCL, research shows that some hesitation and resistance exist between teachers and educational leaders (Bremner, 2022; Keiler, 2018; McPherson, 2021). It is, therefore, plausible to think that through the intentional process required for effective change, educational leadership's encouragement to teachers through this initially challenging process of change can be beneficial on multiple levels (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020).

The role of the student as an active participant in the student-centered learning (SCL) environment has also been investigated throughout the literature (Bell, 2020; Lyles & Oli, 2020). It is suggested that if students lack the proper skills needed to understand SCL, teachers must be able to intervene in a manner that facilitates the cultivation of that skill (Ghani et al., 2021). Adopting any pedagogy takes time (Kulgemeyer et al., 2020) both teachers and students in a student-centered learning environment need time to adjust (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020; Wilson et al., 2019). It is pertinent to note again that the teacher must understand how SCL works within their classroom for students to adapt to and adopt student-centered learning practices (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Lo, 2021). That is why the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2022) was adopted in Louisiana schools. Leaders that go

through a NIET professional development course develop a thorough understanding of the student-driven process, allowing them to be equipped to encourage teacher growth with a student focus (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2021). Though principals lead instruction, they must ensure teachers are academically supported and know the direction they must take academically (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2021). This best practice training equips all educators with proven practices (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2022) that ensure students' success. This is key in the change from a teacher-centered mentality to one that is student-centered (McPherson, 2021) for students, teachers, and educational leaders.

Consequently, literature remains clear that to integrate student-learning practices, educational leaders must be equipped with knowledge on how to assist teachers for them to assist students during the integration of SCL in an ever-transforming academic world always conforming to societal changes (Bremner, 2022; Ghani et al., 2021; Keiler, 2018; Krahenbuhl, 2016; McPherson, 2021; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2022). As noted, though the economy has driven many changes in academic policies, a balance between resources and routines driven by instructional leadership teams that include the principal and other educational leaders can ensure that the school's infrastructure remains firm (Peurach et al., 2019). This is vital when there is a change in any organization. Lewin (1947) believed that change would meet resistance from stakeholders if time were not given to developing new routines which support the goal and reason for the difference. Consequently, an educational leader's necessary action is to motivate teachers on the process needed to unfreeze the old status quo and move toward the new status quo (Hussain et al., 2018). Therefore, collaboration and accountability measures must be put into place. In states such as Louisiana, an action has been put into place to ensure growth, beginning with the principal (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2021; Peurach et al.,

2019). Although it is clear that teachers need the support of their educational leaders, little is seen in the literature on how educational leaders have perceived the experience and what importance they have placed on changing to an SCL mindset to best support teachers (McPherson, 2021).

Change to Student-Centered Learning

Though there is ample research on student-centered facilitation, the literature has not resulted in a sustained conversation about how educational leaders have shifted, enforced implementation, and encouraged change within their schools toward student-centered practices (McPherson, 2021). Research is clear, though, that when school leaders lack knowledge on implementing SCL practices, teachers lack the support (Kulgemeyer et al., 2020; Lo, 2021), time, and other experiences (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022) needed to effectively implement and move toward the change from TCL to SCL (Raja & Khan, 2018). Therefore, educational leaders who do not possess a strong knowledge of SCL are likely to be limited in their overall ability to help their teachers and students develop an understanding of SCL that is both relational and conceptual (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Krahenbuhl, 2016; Onurkan & Özer, 2017). That is why the importance of an educational leader during the process of changing pedagogy is seen as crucial, and how they process, strategize, and encourage the implementation of a pedagogy that is student-centered (Keiler, 2018; McPherson, 2021) impacts the outcome both for the teacher implementing it and thereby if students adhere to this style of learning (Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Özdemir et al., 2021). When considering what effective instructional leadership looks like in the K-12 environment, it can be assumed that leadership's behaviors directly affect instruction and indirectly affect students' learning through any transformational behaviors they portray throughout the process (Farnsworth et al., 2019).

McPherson's (2021) phenomenological study provides a limited glimpse into the perceptions of a few of Idaho's middle and high school educational leaders as they experienced the change from TCL to SCL. McPherson's findings showed a relational transition when teachers change from TCL to SCL. Additional research (Hammad & Alazmi, 2022) supports McPherson's suggestion that continual research in understanding an educational leader's perspective to be considered. Since the educational leader's perspective was seen as a vital factor in the implementation of SCL by their teachers (McPherson, 2021), an examination of an educational leaders' perceptions of SCL may potentially reveal specific experiences that influence how those perceptions develop in those in leadership roles when enforcing the change from TCL to SCL within their schools. Therefore, a better understanding of how educational leaders perceive SCL may reveal how SCL is ultimately adopted within their schools.

In states such as Louisiana, the field of academia is supportive of a collaborative spirit of reform (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2007). As such, there is clear evidence that pedagogical reforms such as the integration of The System of Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP) launched in 1999 in 66 Louisiana schools (Barnett et al., 2014) would not be long-lived without the support from school leadership and ample time to collaborate with trained colleagues (Howard et al., 2019; Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2007). TAP provides an educator with a practical model with the end goal of improved instructional practices supporting student achievement (Barnett et al., 2014). Henceforth, states such as Louisiana have implemented student-centered curriculums in which students can cultivate knowledge and skills to succeed in college or any professional career upon graduating (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.). As a student is in an environment where innovation is promoted, industrial development is the byproduct and thus economic growth, which supports the move to

student-centered practices (Chen & Lin, 2019). Across the board, researchers and policymakers posit that improving the quality of the nation's teaching workforce student achievement can be a plausible outcome when integrating a more student-centered learning environment (Dolezal et al., 2018; Kuh et al., 2006). Hence, educational leaders must be trained in SCL best practices and provide ample professional development opportunities for their teachers to understand how SCL looks within their teaching and learning environment (McPherson, 2021).

Teachers' Beliefs of Student-Centered Learning

A teacher's belief in teaching can determine whether they implement SCL (Bonner et al., 2020; Morrison et al., 2021; Onurkan & Özer, 2017) in their classrooms. Being that these classrooms are different from the traditional teacher-focused classroom (Bonner et al., 2020; Morrison et al., 2021; Raja & Khan, 2018), teachers have come to realize that when faced with how to prepare students for the future, SCL can be complex and challenging (English, 2017) yet worthwhile (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Raja & Khan, 2018). Teacher's beliefs toward SCL are mixed, as studies revealed that many see it as amazing (Bonner et al., 2020; Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Keiler, 2018), and yet others, though they know the importance, hesitate to implement it (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Lo, 2021; Martell, 2015; Onurkan & Özer, 2017). This deep-rooted hesitation prevents a teacher from embracing an SCL environment derived from their perspective in teaching (Leatemia et al., 2022). For this reason, educational leaders are encouraged to assist and identify their teachers' perspectives to remove this obstacle (Korthagen, 2017).

To be effective as an educational leader modeling change, teachers' beliefs must be addressed for implementing pedagogies and adopting new roles (Desimone, 2009; Onurkan & Özer, 2017). Without this, teachers struggle with implementing unfamiliar teaching practices (Keiler, 2018). Therefore, as educators undergo a modification of teaching strategies, processes,

and its structure toward SCL, change that is effective (Hussain et al., 2018) is said to come from leaderships ability to develop competencies in their teachers which are focused on the student through strategies for continuing professional development in a student-centered context (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). This will result in teacher collaboration and greater collective efficacy within the school (Tallman, 2019) when leadership demonstrates behaviors that are encouraged through instructional and staff development (Meyer et al., 2022). With the roles of educators changing from the traditional teacher focus to that of the student being equipped with skills to cultivate knowledge (Raja & Khan, 2018), educational leaders must support teachers (Byrne et al., 2018) as they change to SCL.

When looking at the word pedagogy, Van Manen (1997/2016) defined it as "a kind of leading [in which] the pedagogue walks behind the one who is led" (p. 37). The role of an educational leader is not only to create an environment conducive to teacher growth but it maximizes the environment in which a teacher teaches while enhancing it for maximum student learning (Kılınç et al., 2022). This environment focuses on individuals first (Daniel & Lei, 2019) and, thus, the foundation of servant leadership and the crucible for change (Byrne et al., 2018). Van Manen saw that the pedagogical authority of an educational leader was one with the ability to motivate an individual and, ultimately, a whole community in dealing with challenges and solving them. Therefore, teachers and school administrators are required to gain community support, which is also known to foster the reinforcement of implementing SCL (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Koh, 2018). Principals should be mindful of combining the practice of leadership and pedagogy instead of separating the two (Schneider & Yitzhak-Monsonego, 2020).

Much like the delegation of instructional leadership from the principal to educational leaders in performing, coordinating, and managing teacher performance, supporting teacher

professional knowledge, and managing the school environment (Peurach et al., 2019), leaders must be self-aware and proactive about developing their strengths for long-term success (Byrne et al., 2018). As servant leadership focuses on others first (Greenleaf, 2007), a leader's self-awareness is indeed crucial (Byrne et al., 2018) as they lead their teachers and as a leader of their students (Schneider & Yitzhak-Monsonego, 2020). As such, it has been asserted that two things must occur to facilitate the change from teacher-centered learning to a student-centered learning environment. First, there must be an involvement of educational leaders in this transition. Secondly, a reform in policy must take place to reflect the needs of such an environment, including the removal of barriers. Hence, teachers on the front lines can create, implement, and live in this classroom environment (Kaput, 2018).

Student Beliefs of Student-Centered Learning

Overwhelmingly throughout the literature, students' beliefs toward SCL were positive. Students preferred construction and cooperative learning instead of passive learning (Baeten et al., 2016). Additionally, their self-confidence increased as they took the lead in their learning experience (Ghani et al., 2021). Consistent with the data collected from Kirk et al. (2016) research, highly empowered students in the SCL classroom obtained better grades and increased participation and engagement, as did their educational aspirations (Morrison et al., 2021). Literature suggests that students' buy-in is directly associated with how they engage in active learning and learning gains (Shaw et al., 2019).

Although the majority of research shows that a student's preference lends toward SCL methods, some who retained the thinking of a traditional classroom were challenged with their perceptions of how the class was run (Lee & Branch, 2018; Martell, 2015). It is suggested that when a student's expectations are geared toward being a passive learner, such as in a TCL

environment, any active learning violates their expectations and might cause dissatisfaction in the learning process (Shaw et al., 2019). This can cause resistance and, thus lack of student buy-in in an SCL environment (Brown et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2019). Therefore, it is presumed that teachers and educational leaders must understand the transition process so that students buy into the concept of SCL (Shaw et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the literature shows that students preferred a learning environment where there was balance in constructing knowledge, where feedback came from both teachers and peers (Lea et al., 2003), and where active learning consisted of a cooperative approach (Gillies, 2007).

To put the needs of students first in the K-12 academic arena, addressing the students' perspective of SCL is key (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020; Gemmink et al., 2021). As educational leaders embrace the concept of placing the needs of their followers first (Greenleaf, 1970), the teachers and their students can be noted as being effective in faculty transitioning to SCL (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020). In the classroom, not only are students learning, but teachers are also learning. That is why a student-centered pedagogical approach in the school must be met with ease and allowed to be explored and implemented with time (Lee & Branch, 2018). Additionally, community support is said to provide authentic connections for students between the school and the outside world (Duke et al., 2021). Ultimately, the embracing of both teacher and student buy-in of SCL has been seen to lend itself to addressing respectful and anti-harassment behaviors (Clemons & Hopkins, 2020), both of which can promote a learning environment embodied with traits of a servant leader (Greenleaf, 1998). Qualities are highly sought after in the promotion of SCL (Kaput, 2018) and the workforce (Byrne et al., 2018).

Summary

Change in the context of education requires school leaders to become more flexible in adopting skill sets to move them toward effective and lasting change (Özdemir et al., 2021). Transitioning to SCL is challenging (Raja & Khan, 2018). Leadership that embraces change thrives, while those that do not may struggle. Thus, those who are allowed to implement SCL realize that students welcome this learning style, grow, and encourage the teacher's growth (Bridges & Hallinger, 1997; McPherson, 2021). According to Greenleaf (1970), for the character of competency to permeate followers, a leader must serve with a combination of talent, compassion, and courage. A leader must be mindful of environmental forces, either driving forces promoting change or restraining forces hindering it (Lewin, 1947). Indubitably, leaders must reflect the attributes needed for the shift in mindset from TCL to SCL.

Seeing that educational leaders are the second largest effect among "school/classroom-level variables on student learning after teaching," there is an importance for a greater and deeper understanding of the lived experience of K-12 leaders change to SCL (Leithwood et al., 2020b) within their schools. Examining the change from the educational leader's side, their impact on teachers, students, and their process of encouraging the implementation of SCL, school districts can better understand what is needed to encourage and support leaders to improve teacher outcomes and student success. Similarly, by looking at the experiences in the lives of K-12 educational leaders during the change process, an overall percipience of which support system(s) must be put into place to encourage continual school-wide implementation of SCL and which support structures could better support student success would be of great benefit.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of K-12 educational leaders who have experienced the change from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices from the Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. This area of research has had little exploration in scholarly research, especially as it relates to the lived experiences of educational leaders. Chapter three begins with a detailed overview of the research design and subsequent research questions, setting, and participants of this present study. An explanation of the transcendental phenomenological research design was described with a description of why it was selected for this study. Additionally, chapter three explains the procedures, data collection, and analysis employed throughout the research. An examination of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and a summary of the study at hand concludes this chapter.

Research Design

A qualitative research design is used when researchers seek to address a research problem in which the variables are unknown and thus need to be explored (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 16). Qualitative studies empower participants to share their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45), and thus, this type of study was conducive to discovering and exploring the views and insights of K-12 educational leaders as they have gone through and continue to go through the change of moving away from teacher-centered practices toward the adoption and encouragement of implementing student-centered learning (SCL) environments in their schools. A qualitative research method was selected for this study due to the desire to understand the lived experiences of educational leaders (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology attempts to expand on the reality of what "all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 252). It looks at research from the point of view of questioning how people experience the world to understand the depth of the world we live in (van Manen, 1997/2016, p.5). The primary impetus of phenomenology is to reduce the "human experience, awareness and meaning" of their contact with the phenomenon (Seamon, 2018, pp. 8,10) to a "description of the universal essence" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). This was the appropriate type of design for this research because my purpose in conducting this study was to describe the essence of the educational leaders' experience as they have gone through the process of changing from teacher-centered practices and have experienced the change toward SCL in their schools. Phenomenology informs qualitative inquiry as it studies a phenomenon in the way it appears to the individual(s) who are experiencing it (Leavy, 2020) without denying the realism of the natural world (Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental phenomenology seeks to understand the human condition by identifying a phenomenon experienced by a group of people (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78), while the researcher eliminates all suppositions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Based on phenomenological principles identified by Husserl (1931/2012), transcendental phenomenology was translated by Moustakas (1994) into a qualitative approach. As such, this research study was viable for seeking a phenomenological approach (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). As the researcher, I used this approach intentionally setting aside, or bracketing, all my preconceived judgments about the phenomenon for the participant's experiences to be those which were naturally captured. This allowed freedom for themes to emerge and was accomplished through the process of epoché, a Greek word meaning "to refrain from judgment to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). Thus,

putting aside what I know and or think regarding the phenomenon, I intently engaged the participants from a new vantage point, therefore, was able to gain a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994). To fulfill the purpose of this study as a researcher conducting a transcendental phenomenology, I ensured the focus was solely on the lived experiences of the participating educational leaders (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Questions

Research questions guide a researcher's description of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The research questions of this study sought to thoroughly explore the lived experiences of K-12 educational leaders who have adopted SCL in their schools and encouraged its implementation. One central research question (CRQ) and three sub-questions (SQ) guided this transcendental phenomenology.

Central Research Question

How do educational leaders describe their experiences and perceptions of changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices in their K-12 schools?

Sub-Question One

How do educational leaders perceive the effect of the change process on SCL practices at the classroom and building levels?

Sub-Question Two

How do K-12 educational leaders perceive their role in encouraging a mindset change from a teacher focus to a student-centered focus through its implementation across subjects?

Sub-Question Three

What leadership practices do K-12 educational leaders find effective in mitigating personal resistance throughout the process of changing from a teacher-centered learning mindset

to encouraging and enforcing the implementation of student-centered learning within their schools?

Setting and Participants

The setting for this study took place in a large school district in southeast Louisiana. Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) provides elementary and secondary education serving approximately 49,000 students and employs about 6,400 employees, of which 3,500 were teachers as of the 2021 school year-end reporting. On average, 91% of the teachers are certified, with approximately 80% having three or more years of experience. The number of full-time employed classroom teachers was 2,300 for the 2020-2021 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). It is the most diverse district in Louisiana, hosting 85 schools, 74 district schools, and seven charter schools with five charter organizations, hence the reason it was selected.

Additionally, there is an average 19:1 student-to-teacher ratio (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The organization comprises approximately 70% female and 30% male teachers. The average years of employment for school staff is 7.4 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

Setting

The setting for this research study was K-12 schools in the Blue Ocean school district located in Southeast Louisiana. The school district is governed by a nine-member school board that serves a four-year term and is elected by the citizens of this district. The school board provides input to ensure that each school is responsive to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the communities in which they are located. The superintendent and an eight-member leadership team oversee the district's day-to-day operations. Each school is controlled by a combination of a

principal and or vice principal or dean. In addition, executive master teachers, master teachers, mentor teachers, teacher leader fellows, and content leader fellows provide beneficial feedback to teachers, supporting growth and further establishing each school's leadership within the Blue Ocean School District.

The rationale for selecting this location included several factors such as (a) the number of schools in this school district as compared to other school districts in the state; (b) the number of faculty who are considered educational leaders; (c) have recently implemented and or are still adopting student-centered learning in classrooms; (d) diversity in leadership structure. This public school system underscores a shared leadership approach and invests in encouraging and educating over 500 teachers desiring to participate in leadership roles proactively. Their leadership model emphasizes group comradeship, encouraging all educational leaders to get on board with content, pedagogy, and curriculum, which impacts student achievement and the structure that supports their schools. The educational leaders in this school district are seen as a powerful force who are building a shared efficacy and have helped implement the curricula with fidelity and integrity, not just compliance. This setting provided a rich additional context in which I gained a deeper understanding of the educational leaders' perceptions during their change from teacher-centered practices toward adopting and encouraging student-centered learning in a K-12 setting.

Participants

The participants in this study included educational leaders who have gone through and are still encouraging the implementation of SCL environments across disciplines in their schools. As per Moustakas (1994), an essential criterion for transcendental phenomenology is that all participants must have experienced the phenomenon. I employed criterion-based, purposeful

sampling in this study with no less than 10 participants and up to 15 participants, all of whom are educational leaders of varying ethnicity, gender, and age. The criteria included K-12 educational leaders who have completed training in their respective leadership roles offered through the district or other recognized agencies and are in the process of adopting and encouraging the implementation of SCL within their schools. Therefore, all educational leaders completed formalized leadership training within the past two years. For the academic school year of 2021-2022, educational leaders consisted of principals, vice principals, deans, appointed mentor teachers who support fellow teachers, and hired master teachers who stay connected to the classroom and engage in school-level leadership. In addition, approximately 175 Teacher Leader Fellows (TLF) and 85 Content Leader Fellows (CLF) hold leadership roles across the district.

The director of teacher development provided an estimated list of all educational leaders who have completed leadership training. There are approximately 504 employees who are in leadership roles, have completed the movement, and are in or have been in the process of changing their mindsets from that of a teacher-focus toward one of adopting and implementing SCL. Out of these educational leaders, a diverse mix of 10 educational leaders of varying ethnicity, gender, age, and assigned grade level participated in this study.

Researcher Positionality

In conducting qualitative research, it is imperative that, as the researcher, I articulated my motivation for conducting the study and declare my positionality by identifying the framework which guided my research, my inherent assumptions or bias, and my role as the researcher. As a previous educator and master teacher employed by the study setting, I have mentored new and seasoned teachers and was a part of the core leadership team at one school within this school district. While working in this capacity, I solidified my passion for supporting educational

leaders attempting to change pedagogy focused on student-centered teaching and learning. With my recent resignation from being a master teacher with a school within this district and residing over 60 miles from other schools within this district, these barriers prevent me from having direct contact and association with other educational leaders. I further understood that by identifying my positionality, my previous teaching and leadership experiences were highlighted to reveal any influence I may have over the knowledge this study generates (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kapinga et al., 2022). I told participants they did not need to feel obligated to participate.

As a qualitative researcher, I realized that there was a relationship between what I, as the researcher, have experienced and the bias I could have brought into it; due to this philosophy and the use of this framework could have been vailed by what I as the researcher brought in (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 16). Therefore, to combat any bias, I bracketed my experiences through epoché. Patton (2015) remarks that "in this analytical process, the researcher brackets out the world and presuppositions to identify the data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions" (p. 575).

Interpretive Framework

Social constructivism was used as the research paradigm to guide this study on the experiences of educational leaders adopting and implementing student-centered learning (SCL) in a public school district. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe a social constructivist as one who develops the subjective meaning of one's experiences where these meanings are varied and multiple, driving the researcher to look at the complexity of views. Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that the goal would be to rely on how the participants view the situation. Based on my focus for this study, I explored the lived experiences of the research participants adopting and implementing SCL. I wanted to understand the "multiple realities" (Creswell &

Poth, 2018, p. 35) that exist and, through a shared lived experience, be able to construct this reality subjectively. The transcendental phenomenological approach for this study required me to stand apart and not allow my "subjectivity to inform the descriptions offered by the participants" (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 93). Therefore, examining K-12 educational leaders' descriptions and interpretations of their lived experience while changing and implementing SCL at their schools was a conglomeration of how each participant constructed their experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019).

Philosophical Assumptions

Transcendental phenomenology contains philosophical assumptions, much like any research. It is said that the philosophical beliefs of ontology, epistemology, and axiology "take different forms given the interpretive framework used" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 33). From a social constructivist paradigm, my subjective "*tabula rasa, a* blank slate," was able to use the participants' experiences to understand the phenomenon's essence (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 93). The research methodologies I used in this study included individual interviews, journal writings, and focus groups. Using these methods, opportunities were given to honor each participant's meaning of their shared experience.

Ontological Assumption

In qualitative research, philosophical assumptions underlie the process in which a researcher conducts and proceeds with a study. One philosophical assumption, ontology, is embracing the idea of the multiple realities of the individuals being studied and that of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20). As the researcher, I embraced the outcome of how each participant perceived the phenomenon through their reality to present what they shared accurately. Though the ontological view of a social constructivist looks at multiple realities

which are constructed through lived experiences and interactions with others (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35), my ontological position as a researcher has been shaped by my background as a teacher, mentor teacher, lead teacher, serving in our military, and as a Christian. My most recent role as a master teacher was not considered due to its recency, and I have not lived out this role in the past and have now resigned from this position. Therefore, although I believe that there is one reality created by God, as a qualitative researcher, I remembered that participants may not share in this reality and that other factors have shaped their reality, thus impacting the outcome of what they share. Much like my reality is based on what was just listed, understanding this as a researcher is critical.

Hence, through multiple means of gathering data, my ontological position considered the realities as described by each participant based on the nature of the study through their view (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In transcendental phenomenology, the ontological perspective derives from this reality being internal to the knower or what appears in their consciousness (Hayman et al., 2012). Creswell and Poth suggest that this action should allow the researcher to report the different perspectives of the participants and incorporate them into themes. Validating these themes against the original transcripts will allow me further to explicate the participant's reality (Colaizzi, 1978). I was able to accomplish this by rereading the transcripts to ensure the themes' authenticity (Wirihana et al., 2018) while remaining true to my Christian values and ethical responsibilities as the researcher.

Epistemological Assumption

By immersing directly with the participants as the researcher, the second philosophical assumption, epistemology, arises, which allowed me to get closer to the phenomenon being researched (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To understand the meaning and depth of what participants

revealed during data retrieval moments, such as individual interviews, journal writings, and focus groups, I considered the environment in which the participants lived and worked to create an accurate epistemological assumption, as suggested by Creswell and Poth. Additionally, Creswell and Poth posit that the epistemological assumption of a researcher entails the retrieval of subjective data based on the personal experiences of the participants within their environment. As the researcher, I can say that my epistemological assumption stems from Luke 6:31 (New International Version, 1973/2011) “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” This is the lens through which I view the world, and from where my understanding derives, and as a result, I know that to report what my participants said and how they felt, I had to treat them with respect and earn their trust.

As a social-constructivist researcher, my epistemological position hinged on finding the participant's reality through many tools, which reflect both deductive and inductive evidence, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018). When considering my position as a researcher, my lived experiences, and my relationship with God, I did not fail to consider the interactions and relationships I formed with educational leaders in my study and learned to remove any personal bias I had regarding the research topic (Hayman et al., 2012). This ensured that a detailed description was generated from the reality constructed between myself and my research participants, shaped by all our individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35).

Axiological Assumption

As a researcher, it was essential to remove values and biases to conduct good practices for qualitative research and be aware of them. This action is vital within an axiological assumption. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that as the researcher, I must reveal my position to those who read this study to grasp where I am coming from. Thus, in my position as a Hispanic

female doctoral student, who has previously worked within the setting, I sat aside all prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994) to retrieve the most accurate information from the participants to have a meaningful study. As a social constructivist researcher, I believe my axiological position was to honor each participant's values (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35). Therefore, I developed a stance on which I based my study to give my reader a clear picture of where I was coming from. According to Colossians 3:23 (New International Version, 1973/2011), no matter what, I will remember that whatever I do, I will work at it with all my heart, "as working for the Lord, not for human masters." This truth guided my research, and prayerfully, I interpreted each educational leader's construction of meaning as they experienced the phenomenon.

Researcher's Role

As the human instrument in this study, my main interest in conducting this transcendental phenomenology was to describe the shared experiences of educational leaders (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Grenier, 2019) as they changed their mindset to reflect a student-centered one and how they enforced the implementation of student-centered learning (SCL) within their context. The dialogues captured via interviews and focus groups and feelings expressed through their journal writings were the primary sources of knowledge. They were in line with Moustakas' (1994) methodology. Since human behaviors cannot be predicted due to each individual acting out of their own beliefs, environment, and external factors, as per Moustakas, there is no control over interview subjects. This qualitative transcendental phenomenology sought to view the world through the participants only after setting aside my understanding of the phenomenon. A central tenet of qualitative research is the practice of reflexivity (Olukiun et al., 2021); therefore, I engaged in reflexivity to ensure that my biases did not impact the study.

Though this school district previously employed me as a teacher and as a master teacher, my role as the researcher was one of concern that educational leaders are stuck in an antiquated mindset hindering their growth and ultimately hindering the process of change within themselves and school-wide as the school district is requiring the change to SCL across disciplines. Serving as a leadership team member and obtaining a mentor certification has given me experience in consistent collaboration with teachers, administrators, stakeholders, and other school staff members to ensure that all parties have input on the school's goals. This was important to recognize as the researcher so that I recognized and acknowledged my personal biases.

I ensured that I did not have any connection to the school district participants in this study beyond an educational interest in the understanding of K-12 educational leaders' process of changing their mindsets from a teacher focus to a student focus and encouraging the implementation of student-centered learning. This allowed me to remain open to each research participant while not being directly involved other than being the human instrument recorder of their lived experience. I maintained professionalism as there is no path set for how each participant may react to questions or aspects of the study. Additionally, I remained vigilant of bracketing so that my subjectivity would not bias data analysis and interpretations (Neubauer et al., 2019) as participants explain their lived experiences. Bracketing offers "insights into the ways a descriptive phenomenological attitude plays a role in the associated methods" (Valentine et al., 2018) with the assumption that, as the researcher, I remove my influence and interpretation from the phenomenon.

I distributed and collect recruitment letters via a secure email and writing prompts and personally conduct interviews and focus group sessions. This matter was revisited once I receive IRB and school district approval to conduct this study. I transcribed recordings and analyzed the

data gathered from each participant. As a transcendental phenomenological study, I took time to consider each participant's experience individually during horizonalization (Moustakas, 1994). I bracketed throughout this process by using a researcher's journal to note my assumptions and biases, which could have exposed me to overlook incompatible experiences (Li & Liu, 2020) before, during, and after each data retrieval. During the phenomenological reduction phase, I captured a description of the phenomenon's meanings and essences constructed by each participant subjectively (Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019) by triangulating the data through interviews, journal writings, and focus groups. My goal was to build a foundation of trust with the participants and offer them the opportunity to withdraw from the study and the destruction of their data up until two years from the completion of the research. I safeguarded all such data and personal information by creating pseudonyms, including the research sites and participants' identifying information. Following the transcendental approach provided me with a blueprint to help guide and aided me in determining where any bias on my part may impact the description of the data. By triangulating the data and using member checking (Candela, 2019), I established trustworthiness and transferability in this study.

Procedures

Upon approval from the district office of this school system requesting permission to approach prospective participants and engage in the research study, I obtained consent to conduct this research through Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process entailed I provide the documentation that the school district required regarding the study details. I began the research once the school district provided written approval. Participants were recruited via email with instructions on contacting me if they were interested in volunteering in this study. They were required to sign an Informed Consent Form before any research activities

related to data collection. Though there was no offer of financial remuneration for participation in this study, and due to holding all focus groups via TEAMS, I did not have to provide anything further during the focus group sessions. Participants who completed the Informed Consent Form participated in individual interviews, journal activities, and focus groups to examine the phenomenon.

Data were triangulated using individual interviews, writing prompts, and focus groups with participating educational leaders. All questions were open-ended and non-leading, using clarification instead of assumptions (Råheim et al., 2016). I used TEAMS to conduct interviews and focus groups as the need did arise. Since I used the Teams platform as a recording device, it facilitated the transcription of the audio recordings. After each interview, the digital archives were backed up to a password-protected external hard drive. The journal prompts allowed the participants to expand on their lived experience of the phenomenon. The construction of the prompts expanded on the interview questions to answer the research question and sub-questions. Additionally, since these files were emailed back to me, they will be stored in a password-protected email account for up to two years after completion of the study.

I kept a research journal as an additional data source to support field notes, bracketing, and data evaluation. The research journal aimed to provide an audit trail to improve the credibility and replicability of this study further. Research shows that qualitative field notes are essential to rigorous qualitative research" (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018, p. 381). Additionally, as a researcher, as I recorded information immediately after the interviews and focus groups, Phillippi and Lauderdale suggest that this process can be contextualized and thus recursive as data is added based on participants' comments.

Permissions

The first step in the procedural process was to receive approval for this transcendental phenomenology from the IRB before collecting any data (see Appendix A). Secondly, site approval was requested via an email to the Super Intendent of this school district to conduct research appropriately (see Appendix B). Upon IRB approval and permission to conduct this research within this school district, I began participant recruitment via email by inviting educational leaders to volunteer to participate in the study (see Appendix C). I reviewed the emails, ensuring that the volunteered participants had met the requirements, and sent a follow-up email to formally recruit those educational leaders (see Appendix D). I sent all correspondence through my Liberty University email. Additionally, suppose they ask to review the recruitment email (see Appendix D) and have any other requirements before releasing it; I did ensure I met those requirements. Lastly, since this was requested, I agreed to share my approved dissertation with the site after publication.

Recruitment Plan

It is suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018) that five to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon be recruited and interviewed for a phenomenological study. The proposed sample size for this study and according to Liberty University was within the range of 10 and 15 educational leaders of varying ethnicity, gender, and age to allow for some participant attrition and minimize data redundancy (van Manen, 1997/2016). However, I ensured that my sample size was large enough yet small enough to protect my study from shallow analysis and trivial results (Morse, 2020). Therefore, to ensure scientific rigor through the appropriateness of the sample size (Saunders et al., 2018), as a qualitative researcher, I considered the likely number of interviews necessary to reach data saturation for this study (Morse, 2020). I reached saturation

when no additional significant contributions to the questions during qualitative interviews and within the focus group sessions were revealed (Guest et al., 2020).

As previously stated, I employed criterion-based, purposeful sampling in this study. I intentionally selected individuals to understand the phenomenon better (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Likewise, the school district I chose to approach and recruit was not only determined to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon but because this is a huge school district with various educational leaders. Upon confirming that each educational leader met the criteria of having completed leadership training and had been in this position for the last two school years, participants were selected. Each selected participant was provided with a consent form (see Appendix E) identifying the reason behind this study, as well as the expectations and details of this study. The recruitment letter highlighted how I would maintain confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms for the participants and school district.

Once I selected all participants, the individual semi-structured interviews, journal writing, and focus group sessions commenced. The interviews and focus groups were initially said to be on-site, preferably at a local library. Though holding the interviews and focus groups at such a location would have provided participant anonymity and safety for both myself and the participant, due to recent surgery and an increase in crime within this city, I chose to conduct all interviews and focus groups via TEAMS. Having each participant complete a journal writing and attend an individual interview and focus group session allowed me to triangulate my data and collect rich data relevant to the research questions. Journal writing instructions were provided after the individual interview, with the direction that they must be completed and returned within two weeks (see Appendix F). Once all data was compiled, I developed textural and structural descriptions of the educational leaders' lived experiences to identify and highlight the essence of

this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection Plan

Qualitative research enables researchers to develop an understanding of participants' thoughts and feelings through first-hand data collection methods. In phenomenology research, the researcher delves deeper into participants' lived experiences by exploring how they experience their world. Thus, a qualitative phenomenological study seeks to convey the behavior affected by the participant's thoughts and feelings toward a phenomenon (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Data collection typically includes but is not limited to interviews, observations, journals, poetry, focus groups, and music (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To obtain triangulation of findings as the researcher, I am encouraged to collect multiple sources of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews will be the first method used to capture data as this began the dialogue between myself and the research participants. Next, the writing prompts allowed the participants to reflect more on anything they did not state during the interview. The focus groups were the last method of data collection and were used to capture any remaining details about the lived experience of the participants. Thus, I captured the essence of the participant's voice by using interviews, writing prompts, and focus groups.

Individual Interviews

In this study, qualitative interviews were used as a data collection tool, allowing for an in-depth exploration (Moser & Korstjens, 2018) of unique matters specific to the interviewee's perception and experience of the phenomenon (McGrath et al., 2019). The long interview considered an informal yet interactive data collection method, was the primary means of collecting data for phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). The interview served the purpose of studying the way individuals feel and or perceive situations (van Manen, 1997/2016).

Research shows that a researcher cannot fully understand the way people experience a phenomenon without the process of questioning (Patton, 2015). It is suggested that as a researcher, there is an inability to organize the world without the participants revealing their thoughts, feelings, and intentions (Patton, 2014) and that it is the researcher's opportunity to delve deep into the essence of the participants' experience (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) regarding the phenomenon in question. Thus, for this study, I began with interviews, as is the typical data collection method for a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). I did this to best understand at what stage each participant was in adopting and implementing student-centered learning (SCL) and to gain a greater insight into what and how educational leaders felt before, during, and after this process.

All interviews were planned as face-to-face sessions. However, modifications were considered due to any current COVID-19 restrictions and or any other hindering circumstances. I had to consider using Zoom or Teams to best suit each participant since the need arose. I chose to use TEAMS to video and audio record and transcribe all interviews. The goal was to obtain high-quality information from each educational leader regarding their experience with the transition to SCL (Patton, 2015). Each question asked was disciplined by the fundamental research question that prompted the need for this process in the first place (van Mannen, 1997/2016). Through carefully constructed open-ended questions, as the researcher, I remained faithful to the topic of study while allowing the participants to individually open up and recall how they perceived and ultimately described their experience of changing, adapting, and encouraging their teachers to implement SCL. As the researcher, I created a secure climate in which the participant felt comfortable responding honestly and comprehensively (Moustakas, 1994). The questions during this data collection process were bracketed. As the researcher, I

obtain descriptions of the research participants' experiences by tape-recording or videotaping the interviews upon approval.

The 18 open-ended questions are formatted in clear and understandable verbiage for the educational leader to elaborate on their journey of changing from TCL to SCL. The construction begins with broad questions to “facilitate obtaining detailed, vital, substantive descriptions” of the research participants' experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116). Through an embedded recording device on TEAMS, I recorded all interviews to actively listen to what the participant stated to ask follow-up questions or probes, as well as took brief notes while remaining true to what they say about their lived experience (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I attempted to not only capture what was being said verbally but also recorded what was implicitly communicated by inference and through mannerisms, facial expressions, and any other observations, keywords, and phrases made during the interview, which brought clarity when I analyzed the data.

As suggested by Creswell and Guetterman (2019), interviews were held in a quiet, suitable location free from all distractions and additional noise to better record the approximate 60-minute sessions. I allowed the participants to choose the best time, day, and a neutral location, such as their home or classroom, for these interviews to take place within two weeks to give myself a schedule and not give too much time that may cause me to lose their participation. Transparency and integrity were provided using open-ended questions and recorded answers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All files were password-protected. Interview questions were worded to determine at what stage the school was in adopting and implementing SCL.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself and your educational career through your current position as an educational leader. (Demographical)
2. Describe the process you went through in becoming an educational leader. (CRQ)
3. How do you exercise leadership within your school (both seen and unseen)? (CRQ)
4. What is your perception of student-centered learning (SCL)? (CRQ)
5. What is your experience with SCL? (CRQ)
6. Please describe how you, as an educational leader, perceive what SCL looks like by telling the phase your school is currently in with the process of changing to SCL. (CRQ)
7. Please describe your perception of the effect during the change process to SCL within the classroom. (SQ1)
8. Considering every core subject classroom, how did (how will) the change to SCL impact the school? (SQ1)
9. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your perceptions of the change to SCL at the classroom and building level? (SQ1)
10. How does your leadership affect those within the school? (SQ2)
11. How do you collaborate or directly work with teachers in a typical school day, and what degree of importance do you place on collaboration with your teachers? (SQ2)
12. What professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to understand what SCL is and how it would look across subjects in the school? (SQ2)
13. Describe how you encouraged teachers to change to SCL and how they could better implement SCL during this change process? (SQ2)
14. Describe your challenges when working with teachers in implementing SCL. (SQ2)

15. When has it been necessary to modify your leadership style based on implementing SCL in your school? (SQ3)
16. Describe ways you were able to mitigate personal resistance during the course of changing from TCL to SCL? (SQ3)
17. Where do you think your leadership practice can improve during times of change? (SQ3)
18. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experience in adopting and implementing SCL? (SQ3)

Each interview question was drafted from a thorough analysis of the literature, the central research question, and guiding research sub-questions. All 18 interview questions captured the participant's experience, understanding, and perspectives in specific contexts (Bayeck, 2021). Using the theoretical framework, change theory guided interview questions (Lewin, 1947).

Question one was used to understand the educational leaders' demographics better. This question established a communicative discourse between the interviewee and myself. Interview questions 2 through 7 were designed to capture the educational leaders' experience and perception of SCL (Hannafin et al., 2014; Herranen et al., 2018; Keiler, 2018; Lo, 2021) while changing toward adopting and encouraging the implementation of it in their schools. These questions further helped establish the dialogue and rapport needed during the interview process (Moustakas, 1994). Each of these questions was intended to provide the participant with questions relevant to their experience as an educational leader. They are meant to be straightforward in inquiring about their perception of SCL.

Interview questions 8 through 10 probed the participants' perception of the effect of changing to SCL at the classroom and building levels. Literature supports the notion that educational leaders (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022; Iversen et al., 2015; Lo, 2021) and students (Baeten

et al., 2016; Hannafin et al., 2014; Krahenbuhl, 2016) need prior knowledge and experience with SCL. Thus, these questions allowed the educational leaders to describe their perception and also were able to reflect and respond to how this looked at the classroom and building level.

Conversational interviewing using semi-structured techniques helps participants recall and reflect upon their experiences regarding the phenomenon (van Manen, 1997/2016). Questions 11 through 14 asked the participants to respond to questions related to their leadership experience changing mindsets from TCL to SCL and how they encouraged the implementation of SCL in their schools. These questions allowed the participants to reflect on their leadership styles and interactions with others as educational leaders. Analyzing the literature supports educators' difficulty in implementing SCL without proper training (Bremner, 2022), and therein lies the need for a change in thinking when implementing student-centered pedagogies (Koh, 2018). Hence, these questions were meant to reveal mindset shifts educational leaders have to go through in the process of changing from TCL mindsets to SCL and how they encouraged the implementation of SCL.

Interview questions 15 through 18 were additionally guided by change theory (Lewin, 1947). Change theory recognizes that environmental forces can promote or hinder change (Lewin, 1947). Servant leadership recognizes that leaders can be agents of change (Tanno & Banner, 2018) and their role as leaders focuses on those being served (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 15). This echoes Lewin’s belief in the influence of an individual (educational leader) within a group in instituting change within schools. Participants were allowed to reflect on leadership practices that might prevent or encourage a growth mindset. Additionally, these questions required participants to examine their leadership style and evaluate their attitude in changing toward SCL and how they encouraged their schools to adopt and implement SCL practices for their schools to

improve the skills needed by students in the 21st century (Howard et al., 2019; McPherson, 2021).

Since this research study used a semi-structured interview format, additional probing questions were anticipated. I used guiding questions by repeating what they had stated or leaving moments of silence to encourage a more profound recollection of the lived experience (van Manen, 1997/2016). These questions were shared with experts to review and comment on so that I could refine any before using the questions in the study. A pilot study of these questions was not used for clarity.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The first step in analyzing the individual interviews, according to Moustakas (1994), is to transcribe the audio files into a written format. I used Teams to record both the audio and video and did have an audio recorder for backup during the interview sessions to prevent missing anything. The Teams web application has an embedded transcription which was used to transcribe the audio recordings into a written format. Upon completion of the transcription, I verified its accuracy personally by listening to the audio while reading the transcription and making any needed corrections. I then watched the video recording to add notations of the participant's mannerisms as reflected by each question asked. I looked at the notes I took during and after the interview and input this information. Placing the transcribed interviews before me I studied the material through the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis (Moustakas, 1994, p. 118). I maintained a code book to document and organize all codes and themes assigned.

Using the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method instead of the van Kaam method, both proposed by Moustakas, I began the analysis by obtaining a complete description of my own

experience of the phenomenon (p. 122). This was done to understand that despite going through the process of epoché, I would not be able to remove myself from the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 305). From this perspective, as I analyzed the responses given, my focus was to examine the verbatim transcript of the participant's experience while bracketing myself out. I then looked for significant statements or quotes about the meaning of adopting and implementing SCL in their schools. I accomplished this through horizonalization, which assigns equal value to each statement representing a segment of importance to the experience as purported by Moustakas.

Here I looked for significant phrases to aggregate the text into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code within the literature and then assigning a label to the code (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 190). I read and re-read my coded transcriptions to find broader patterns between participants. These segments were then clustered into themes. The combination of these segments and themes was synthesized into a description of the textures of the experience. I approached the textural description from different perspectives (imaginative variation) with the eventual arrival of describing the structural meanings and essences of their experience. Not only was a textural-structural description emerging representing the meaning and essence of the experience as posited by Moustakas, but I also generated one for each participant by repeating the four modified steps of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Before the final step, I integrated the descriptions into a universal description representative of the group experience as a whole (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). The data collected directly represented the individual experience of the lived phenomenon. I finalized by journaling my experience throughout this process and compared it with my initial notations of the interview process to avoid adding any biases in this and further data analyses.

Journal Prompts

Journal writing can benefit individuals by enhancing reflection about their everyday lives, beliefs, hopes, dreams, and frustrations while facilitating critical thought (Walker, 2006). History is a cumulative portrait of journal writings that paint the landscape of individuals' recorded dreams, hopes, visions, fantasies, feelings, and innermost thoughts (Janesick, 1999). The use of journal prompts allowed me and the participants to communicate unrestrictedly. It enabled the participant to describe their experience "by increasing the understanding and appreciation of the experience to interpret what is going on within and because of the experience" (Sutton et al., 2021, p. 37). Research shows that when participants can write their experiences, most items are answered, attributing to lower recall error and interpreted as a sign of valid data (Verbrugge, 1980).

Verbrugge posits that though each participant can answer each writing prompt individually, there is consistency in results. Ultimately to gather data, Husserl (1970) suggests that the research participant be able to "describe fully what is seen, just as it is, in such and such a manner," and this can be done through the use of writing prompts (p. 35). Reflection is a process that "becomes more exact through corrections that more completely and accurately present what appears before us" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 93). Hence, writing prompts allowed each educational leader to focus on their lived experience by writing and re-writing if needed.

As a researcher conducting a transcendental phenomenology study, journal prompts allowed me to look deeper into themes to construct for each participant an "individual textural description of their experience" with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). This is why I provided journal prompts soon after the interview. First, so the participants could have time to reflect on their experience and be able to voice it in an unconstrained setting. Second, this

provided helpful information I was able to gather while gaining a more excellent picture of the true essence of their lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were asked to reflect upon five questions to prevent taking too much time away from the participant's duties. I allowed two weeks for returning their responses to be sensitive to this. Participants were asked to answer the following questions in less than four sentences.

Individual Journal Prompts

1. Reflecting on your experience and perceptions of the change to SCL, describe in detail what the adoption and implementation of SCL looked (looks) like for you within your context. (CRQ)
2. Reflecting on how you as an educational leader perceived the effect of changing to SCL at the classroom and building level, describe what you wish you had known then and what you believe could have caused a smoother change for yourself as an educational leader within classrooms. (SQ1)
3. Reflecting on the practices you are using or did use during the change and implementation of SCL, as an educational leader, how do (did) you perceive your role as an encourager for others throughout this process (during this process)? If you could redo this process, describe how you could be more effective in encouraging the adoption and implementation of SCL across your school. (SQ2)
4. Reflecting on challenges you faced in adopting and implementing an SCL mindset, please describe which leadership measures you perceive would be (have been) effective during this process. (SQ3)
5. Reflecting on your experience, as an educational leader, throughout the implementation of SCL, what type of leadership practice would have been the most effective to encourage

a school-wide change to SCL as a means of equipping students with 21st-century skills? (SQ3)

By asking the participants to reflect upon their perceptions and experiences in changing toward an SCL environment in a private setting, they were able to reflect on their prior answers to the interview questions while digging deeper into their experience. The rationale for using these five questions was that while the interview questions allowed for a dialogue to begin, I wanted to provide an opportunity for educational leaders to reflect on their lived experiences. The literature describes reflection as critical to phenomenological research as it asks the participant to make personal meaning of their lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, being constructed after the central research question and the three sub-questions, these questions did suffice in allowing the participant to elaborate further.

The goal of using these journal prompts in this phenomenological research was to allow the participant to unravel or uncover the direct description of the experience by writing directly what may have remained hidden or concealed (van Manen & van Manen, 2021) during the interview process. Using a writing prompt after an interview and before the focus groups allowed for "questions that gave a direction and focus to meaning" while further awakening concern and accounting for the participant's passionate involvement with the experience of adopting and implementing SCL as an educational leader (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59) thus, remaining true to the phenomenological research method.

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

Following Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological data analysis process, I began by documenting my experience with the phenomenon based on the same questions asked in the journal prompts. I then engaged in purposeful reflection to note how my experience impacted the

phenomenological description of the data collection and analysis process. This was achieved by ensuring I did not apply preconceived biases to the data analysis by bracketing my preconceptions as I read the participants' responses.

Once the journal prompts were completed and collected, I began organizing the documents. The responsibility for coding this data fell on me as the human instrument in the study. Thus, remaining true to the analyzing procedures described by Moustakas (1994), I considered "each statement concerning significance for a description of the experience" (p. 122). I focused on the coding process to preserve the participant's responses as I read through each journal. Looking at my code book developed during the analysis of the interviews, I coded the journal prompts looking for significant words and phrases as well as adding codes where new nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements (Saldaña, 2021, p. 9) were found as per the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis proposed by Moustakas. I then clustered these codes into themes. This process involved horizonalization or assigning equal value to each relevant statement, "encouraging a rhythmical flow" between myself and the participant (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). I added a narrative description "of what they experienced (textural description) and how they experienced it (structural description)" to my journal and then combined them to convey the essence of their experience of adopting and implementing student-centered learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 305).

Focus Groups

In this study, focus groups were used to provide an opportunity for interaction between myself as the researcher and the participants to create a dialogue. Through specific questions, my goal was to create an environment conducive for participants to reflect further on their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Though limited to a maximum participation of six

participants, focus groups allowed me to collect a shared understanding (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) of how this diverse group of educational leaders perceived and experienced the change from traditional TCL to SCL practices. I used focus groups after analyzing the data from the interviews and journal writings of the participants as it is one of the most commonly used data collection methods besides face-to-face interviews (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Patton (2015) supports this data collection and posits that since participants hear each other's responses in groups, this would possibly spark a memory within them that would help each participant add to their initial responses (p. 475). The ability as the researcher to not just hear what participants say but to truly listen and observe during a focus group allowed me to notice any gestures as they spoke and revealed their perspective on how they experienced the phenomenon during this interactive discussion (Flick, 2018).

Since all educational leaders were from schools within the same school district, I found focus groups to best finalize my data collection as this provided a way of collecting data in a social context (Patton, 2015). Focus groups are a complex, multi-layered process that can expose deeper insight into the lived experience; thus, supporting the data triangulation goal. Further, since I conducted focus groups to gain a clearer picture of any remaining questions, the interviewees will self-select one of two times to attend one of the 60-minute focus group sessions. The number of focus group sessions did depend on the number of participants I had; hence, days and times were all set to best suit their schedules. If all participants would not have been available during either of these two dates, the minimum acceptable number of participants was three.

I wanted to keep the focus groups varied and diverse to gain a clearer understanding of the lived experience through their dialogue. It is suggested by van Manen (1997/2016) that some

individuals find writing difficult and will tend to "talk with much more ease and eloquence and with much less reserve than they will write their thoughts on paper" (p. 64). Thus, by providing the opportunity in a socially-constructed focus group setting, research participants can offer additional meanings to their lived experience, adding credibility to the study. The focus groups were held virtually and not in person free from interruptions and video and audio recorded. I encouraged participants to keep the discussion and participants of the session confidential. These focus group questions allowed participants to explore further and refine answers given throughout the interview process and through the journal prompts. I started with individuals sharing basic professional information and then proceed with questions as each participant got more comfortable. The questions below are samples to consider.

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself, telling us your title as an educational leader, how you perceived the process of changing to student-centered learning, how you implemented and encouraged its implementation, and how that has impacted you as an educational leader. (CRQ)
2. How do you define student-centered learning, and where did you derive this meaning? (SQ1)
3. What role did you play in the change process of implementing SCL at the classroom and building level? (SQ1)
4. What should be done to encourage teachers to change to SCL and implement it in their day-to-day teaching? (SQ2)
5. What needs to be done differently to promote educational leaders' self-efficacy during pedagogy changes such as TCL to SCL? (SQ3)

6. What lessons did you learn as an educational leader in changing your pedagogical thinking from TCL to SCL, and how did you encourage it within your context? (CRQ, SQ3)
7. Is there anything else you would not mind sharing that could be instrumental in understanding your experience changing to SCL and how you enforced implementing SCL?

Additional questions were asked based on the nature of the responses from participants. However, these questions were not documented as they were explanatory in nature to clarify participants understanding of the question.

Question 1 was intended to prompt deeper reflection upon their lived experience of changing to SCL and how they encouraged the implementation of SCL as an educational leader. Providing a forum for educational leaders to discuss their perceptions was helpful in prompting them to reflect deeper than they did through interviews and journal prompts (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Further, as suggested by Creswell (2013) and Patton (2015), this question provided a further understanding and context of their transition to SCL compared to individual interviews.

Questions 2 and 3 were specifically targeted to prompt the group participants to see how varied meanings of SCL exist. Additionally, it allowed them to realize that roles varied based on their title as an educational leader and how changing to SCL differed within the classroom and building level. Literature has demonstrated that there is a misunderstanding of what SCL is and looks like by both teachers and educational leaders (Krahenbuhl, 2016; Onurkan & Özer, 2017). Literature is clear that in an educator's schooling and throughout the teacher's professional experience, pedagogical practices are developed, thus having the potential to hinder an educator

from adopting SCL and the need to shift thinking toward new pedagogies (Koh, 2018). This discussion was intended to provide a greater depth of understanding of how one's life professional experiences can impact how something is interpreted and viewed.

Question 4 prompted the educational leader to reflect on effective practices as a leader when the need to encourage the adoption and implementation of a pedagogy exists. Examining the perception and the lived experience of an educational leader's change toward SCL can assist in understanding the strategies of how it is to be implemented in their school and how it impacts student learning (Keiler, 2018; McPherson, 2021). When school leaders lack knowledge on implementing SCL, it has been found that teachers will lack support (Lo, 2021) and additional time to experience (Dunbar & Yadav, 2022) what SCL looks like within a given context. This question supported Lewin's theory of change (1947).

Questions 5 and 6 allowed the participants to reflect on the needs of educators as leaders in addressing self-efficacy and its role throughout the change process of SCL. Additionally, reflecting on lessons learned prompted others to realize something internal that had not been verbalized yet. These two questions were reserved for discussion in the focus group setting to provide a peer support environment to help address emotions that could arise during the responses of others. Being experts in their contexts as educational leaders, they can support one another while assisting in problem-solving techniques they may have used that could further develop an atmosphere of change within their school. I focused on observing the interaction between participants during this time to note non-verbal cues exhibited by participants during this portion of the inquiry.

Question 6 invited the participants to offer critical insights into the lived experience of implementing SCL through the lessons they learned within this process. These observations of

lessons learned may be constructive in developing suggestions for other leaders during changing pedagogy.

I ended each focus group with question 7. The purpose of including this question was so that throughout the dialogue between those in the focus group, other memories may arise that the participant may not have thought of or as of yet expressed. Thus, the allowance to vocalize any such thought may help to gain a deeper understanding of their experience and perception of the changing pedagogical mindsets from TCL to SCL and how they encouraged the adoption and implementation of SCL within their context. The goal was to yield the best information for the participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 218). Since all participants were educational leaders and familiar with the school district's goals of implementing SCL, I wanted to make sure no stone was left unturned.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Each focus group session was recorded and transcribed through the web-application Teams to ensure each response was captured. Just like the interviews, I had an audio-video recorder to record each session (depending on the number of participants) to preserve transcripts of the dialogue. The first step in analyzing data in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 183). This was accomplished by first reading over the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of my data collection. The transcriptions were then organized so that I could study the material and begin coding. I then watched the recordings to note any non-verbal cues which could reflect why or how the participant answered in such a way. I added any notes to the transcripts. Since there was a little confusion about a portion of the interview, I emailed the participants to ask for clarification about the information they shared. This ensured that the intent and meaning of their

response were understood clearly. Once I went through the transcriptions, I began to code using emergent themes already present in my coding book. I then evaluated the transcripts from the focus groups to identify statements that aligned with data collected from the previous two methods to follow Saldaña's (2021) suggestion of finding any novel or outlier data. Looking for patterns makes evidence more trustworthy for my findings "since patterns demonstrate habits, salience, and significance in people's daily lives" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 8). I referred to my audit trail to ensure I had bracketed myself out and had once again remained true to Moustaka's modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis. In doing this, I added to my narrative the participant's description of the conveyed essence of their experience, adding textural and structural descriptions.

Data Synthesis

Qualitative data analysis requires the researcher to explore deeply and look for thorough explanations (van Manen, 1997/2016). As Moustakas (1994) described, phenomenological data analysis will support this study. The modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of calculation of phenomenological data, as proposed by Moustakas (1994), will be followed. Analysis and synthesis included the usage of epoché or the bracketing of my biases and assumptions, phenomenological reduction, horizonalization, which allowed for textural descriptions of the participant's experience, and imaginative variation, allowing for structural descriptions of the participants' experiences. Lastly, the final stage of transcendental phenomenological data analysis synthesized these structural and textural descriptions to determine the essence of the shared experience of K-12 educational leaders' change in mindset from teacher-centered practices toward adopting and implementing SCL.

Since this study relied on audio and visual recordings and journal prompts, I began by setting aside my experiences in the process known as epoché (Moustakas, 1994). The second step, as explained by Moustakas, was phenomenological reduction. This was where I referred to my journal kept while gathering data. I mentally retraced steps and memories to recount experiences with the phenomenon, as suggested by Moustakas. I had the personal experiences of the educational leaders transcribed from the individual interviews and focus groups, documenting the participant's experience of this phenomenon along with the journal writing documents. From the transcripts gathered from each participant, I analyzed each experience looking for significant statements or words which described the experience. I followed Saldaña's (2021) coding suggestions as a code "attributes meaning to each datum for later purposes' of theme development" (p. 6). This third step, imaginative variation, is where I interpreted the data, which was used to identify "invariant horizons or meaning units," correlate these critical themes to literature and then was able to construct them into a unified statement (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). Descriptions of the experience were presented, understanding that this final step was not exhaustive and the experiences could be continually evolving. Through these steps, I was able to explore and understand how each educational leader experienced this phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Themes were entered into Excel for ease of compartmentalization and kept in my journal.

The process, therefore, included organizing the data, assigning codes, and grouping each statement into themes describing the texture and experience through verbatim examples taken from the participants' descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). As the instrument of data gathering, I immersed myself in the experience of the educational leader. Here is where I reflected on all the

data gathered by looking at my journal, the codes assigned, and the emergent themes to explicate emerging patterns.

Horizonalization

Listing all relevant nonoverlapping statements and grouping them into themes accordingly is the process of horizonalizing (Moustakas, 1994). In this step, I read and re-read the transcripts and journals as a reflective process aiming at grasping the whole nature of the phenomenon as purported by Moustakas. This allowed me to peel each layer back, revealing the experiences through reflection, yielding the essence of meaning while eliminating irrelevant statements. Reducing the participant's experiences into invariant constituents and then clustering them required me to eliminate personal and exterior biases to categorize the essential core data points thematically. Themes, as purported by Creswell and Poth (2018), are "broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea" (p. 194). Although I did not use any qualitative data analysis software, I used a codebook to keep track of all codes assigned, which, as suggested by Creswell and Poth, contain the name of the code, a description of the code, and an example of the code (pp. 190-191). Using this allowed me to keep track of all codes, cluster them into themes based on the relevance to the research questions and create individual textural descriptions for each participant. I used In Vivo codes to identify and differentiate different facets of the meaning structure based on the exact wording used by participants (Saldaña, 2021, p. 137). Additionally, as per Saldaña, this allowed the data to reflect the participants' perspectives.

Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation is where I searched for possible meanings and approached the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, allowing me to construct structural descriptions

(Moustakas, 1994). This step is where Moustakas suggests that I aim to illuminate "the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced" by using imagination and developing a description of how the experience came to be (p. 98). Here, I expanded the inspection scope to discover what had been hidden while consolidating and eliminating code redundancy. Imaginative variation enabled me as the researcher to derive structural themes from the descriptions within the data obtained through self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-knowledge during phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). This step played a role in my coding process as it helped me look for the underlying textural meanings, as recommended by Moustakas, to enhance sensitivity in the analysis process. Since there are no limits to what becomes possible, the thrust was toward the meaning of the essence, as described by Moustakas.

Synthesis of the Essence

This final step in the phenomenological research process is where a composite of all participant's experiences texturally and structurally is described (Moustakas, 1994). The essence, as per Moustakas, is first never exhausted, and secondly, it is based on the phenomenon's time and place as per my vantage point. I approached this with a fresh lens which gave this study a new perspective on the synthesis of the descriptions and lived experiences of the educational leaders once completed. The synthesis of the textural and structural meanings of what and how the participants experienced the phenomenon were grouped holistically upon reviewing the statements from the interviews, journal prompts, and focus groups. This means all parts were considered based on "time, space, bodily concern, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation" to others, weighed by the research questions, hence when synthesized, the textural-structural descriptions were considered as a universal whole as recommended in the fourth step

of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 99,122). I used verbatim examples to describe “how” the experience happened, representing the structural description. In this final step of the analysis process, my intuitive integration combined the textural and structural descriptions to inform the reader of what the educational leaders experienced and how they experienced it. This was done in a unified statement representing the perception of the full adoption and implementation of student-centered learning in a K-12 public school setting in the southcentral region of the United States at one point in time through my viewpoint as the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

While increasing the validity of data, methodological triangulation used in this study allowed me to conclude the culmination of gathered data, the assumption that the human experience made sense to the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the determination of the themes, or the experiential structures that made up this experience (van Manen, 1997/2016, p. 79). This précis the essence of the participant's experience. In addition, with multiple perspectives collected throughout the data collection, triangulation was ensured. Member checking increased the credibility of the results as I allowed each participant to check the data for accuracy based on their experiences (Candela, 2019).

Trustworthiness

To establish the trustworthiness of the findings of this study, I carried out my research with a result closely aligned with my participants' experiences (Xerri, 2018). Thus, integrity was critical in this research study. Nowell et al. (2017) suggest that a key element in attaining trustworthiness is analyzing the themes that emerge in a study. By extracting the participants' perspectives on their experience and probing them on the phenomenon, I gained the key to interpreting themes (Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 1997/2016). Additionally, as the researcher, I

based this study's trustworthiness on four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Collectively, the data triangulation used in this study created trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility

A significant part of qualitative research is not only being transparent with the data gathered by the researcher but as the researcher fully disclosing how data will be gathered to increase credibility while facilitating replicability (Closa, 2021). This study addresd credibility as it pertained to finding the reality of lived experiences through multiple methods (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999; Patton, 2014). Triangulation of the data was obtained through individual interviews, journal writings, and focus groups, reinforcing the study's findings. These three data collection methods allowed for a well-rounded perception of the educational leaders' lived experience of the phenomenon.

To safeguard what this study intended to describe, I asked participants to participate in member checking for accuracy in my description of their experience from their interviews, and focus groups, as well as any conclusions drawn from their journal writings to ensure the credibility of this study (Shenton, 2004). Research shows that member checking is the most valuable means of bolstering a study's credibility (Shenton, 2004; Xerri, 2018). In phenomenological analysis, participant feedback on the truthfulness of the acknowledged themes is frequently utilized (Moustakas, 1994). Participants can review this information and elaborate on anything they deem necessary, increasing the study's credibility and reducing the possibility of error or misrepresentation (Moustakas, 1994).

I embarked on reflexivity to explain my experience with the phenomenon, allowing me to look for bias in my understanding and description of how educational leaders perceive the

adoption and integration of student-centered learning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). This was important in establishing credibility for this study because it revealed my perspectives on the phenomenon (Patton, 2015), which causes any reader to filter the information I present for them to make their interpretations of the study (Makel et al., 2022). Lastly, to ensure credibility, I did not alter the study for any reason (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). I had an expert contributor to ensure the study's credibility by addressing the prospective participants' viewpoints. The research chair functioned as the expert reviewer.

Transferability

Transferability can generalize or apply research findings to other research areas (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In qualitative studies, audit trails can help others judge if the study applies to new settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). The readers can decide if transferability was met through multiple data collection methods and by creating a detailed, thick, rigorous description (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1997/2016). Additionally, the prospective dissertation committee as peer reviewers and auditors provided me with an external perspective to determine the transferability of this study (van Manen, 1997/2016). By using formal and informal collaborative insights into the findings, I was able to share thematic concepts with my dissertation committee and allow colleagues to review the text to ascertain if others would be able to arrive at a common understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021; van Manen, 1997/2016). Collaboration in this way can confirm what is seen through the repetition of viewing the evidence "while the phenomenon as a whole remains the same" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). This study brought new knowledge into the field of education as it enriched similar studies exploring similar phenomena, thus adding to the body of knowledge within the educational context (Nosek & Errington, 2020).

Dependability

Dependability shows consistent findings that can be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was demonstrated by clearly and effectively describing the procedures undertaken throughout the study so they can be easily understood and replicated. Further, I created an audit trail of my thought process. I accomplished this by writing down reasons why I coded specific data and grouped them in such a manner during horizonalization. I looked for anything that did not align with previous reasonings and made the needed corrections which allowed for the removal of any personal biases to produce further validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, the triangulation process provided ample information. As Makel et al. (2022) purport, readers can critically evaluate the findings and determine if the results may apply to similar contexts. Makel et al. further believe that this "level of detail has the added benefit of providing a roadmap for replication" (p. 216). Since qualitative studies are derived from first-person accounts of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994), embedding dependability elements into this study was vital. I additionally followed the doctoral research process prescribed by Liberty University to ensure dependability with a complete review of the research methodology and any products evaluated by my dissertation committee and the Director of Qualitative Research.

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the "degree to which the findings of the study can be confirmed by other researchers" while securing the "intersubjectivity of the data" (Tuval-Mashiach, 2021, p. 369). As the researcher, I remained objective throughout the data analysis process (Shenton, 2004) and bracketed experiences through epoché to not interject preconceptions within the developed themes (Moustakas, 1994). To establish confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability must all be achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As previously stated, I kept a reflective journal throughout the data collection and analysis process to create an audit trail (Nowell et al., 2017). By documenting all the analytical steps I took and why I took them, I added to the audit trail key components such as personal notes, interpretations, and inferences that explained the rationale for my choices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Koch, 1995). Documenting this way assisted the auditor in determining if this study was "grounded in events rather than the inquirer's constructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 324). Therefore, the use of audit trails allows the readers to review the findings, interpretations, and conclusions regarding theoretical and methodological issues throughout the study to analyze if they are associated with the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017; Shenton, 2004). Through the triangulation of individual interviews, journal writings, and focus groups, confirmation of the trends within the data was evident (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1997/2016). Thus, by providing the participants with the opportunity to verify transcripts and participate in member checks, confirmability, validity, and dependability were achieved in this transcendental phenomenological study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2021).

Ethical Considerations

Multiple ethical considerations were adopted in this study. I sought IRB approval from Liberty University and Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana before data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I created and assigned pseudonyms to provide anonymity for the school district and research participants. Additionally, I only vaguely described the school district to ensure that the research participants within this associated school district could not be tracked. I provided each participant with an informed consent form documenting their rights, the purpose of the study, any known risks, and any potential benefits (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994).

All information I obtained was for this study, and as the researcher, I made it clear that participation was voluntary. Upon signing the consent form, participants demonstrated their understanding that their participation was voluntary and were informed that they could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence. These consent forms were locked in a locked filing system only accessible to me. Responses for the interview, focus groups, and journal prompts were stored on a laptop under an encryption key. The password that was used to unlock stored responses was only accessible to me as the researcher. I used my Liberty University email solely to directly contact research participants to review transcriptions and clarify any data given in the journal prompts. Participants also used this email account as a secondary method of returning their journal prompts. I ensured my phone number was the backup password for this email account if the password had been forgotten.

Further, a master list was created and stored separately to protect anonymity since data was stored electronically, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018). No research participants chose to return journal prompts via postal services; however, I protected any printouts in a locked filing system for a term determined sufficient. However, all data collected will be destroyed after three years if I decide that this study will not be extended.

Summary

This transcendental phenomenology seeks to provide an understanding of K-12 educational leaders' lived experiences of change from a mindset of teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices and their adoption and encouragement of implementing this pedagogy within their schools. Chapter three describes the methodology I used in this transcendental phenomenological study guided by Moustakas's (1994) framework for qualitative research. The purpose of exploring the shared experiences of educational leaders who have and are in the

process of changing toward student-centered practices were captured through individual interviews, journal writings, and focus group sessions. This chapter clarified the research design, questions, site, procedures, and my role as the researcher. Additionally, the method of participant selection was also discussed. The data was analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method and Saldaña's (2021) methods for coding, all of which I employed epoché to identify key themes expressed by the participants of the lived phenomenon. This chapter ends with highlighting the study's trustworthiness and ethical considerations. This chapter aimed to provide the reader with the ability to critically examine this study and understand the procedures and methods I used within it.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders to equip students with 21st-century skills. This chapter provides a summary of the participants' data with a brief description of the research participants, preceded by Table 1, depicting the leadership role of the participants. Next, a summary of the research results includes the data collection and the themes discovered based on the data analyzed from individual educational leader interviews, journal prompt responses, and focus groups. These are followed by Table 2, which lists theme development. Seven themes emerged, presented to help explain the information that addresses the central research question and the three sub-questions through in vivo evidence, followed by Table 3 summarizing themes, research questions, and corresponding evidence. This chapter closes with answers to the research questions, a summary of the information presented in this chapter, and an interesting finding.

Participants

I followed Chapter Three's outlined recruitment procedures upon IRB's consent to conduct the study. Within seven weeks, 12 educational leaders responded to my email invitation to participate in the study. However, only 10 research participants agreed to participate in this phenomenological study (see Table 1), meeting length of time as an educational leader and currently employed by Blue Ocean School District (BOSD). The selection process resulted in an even distribution of each leadership role and grade level from seven K-12 schools in BOSD. The participants were three male and seven female educational leaders with an ethnically proportional distribution to the district leadership demographics. At the time of data collection,

two participants worked at middle schools, three participants at a K-8 school, one at a PreK- 5th-grade school, one at a high school, and two at a PreK-12th grade school.

From the time of their consent to participate, each participant was given a pseudonym selected from a list of individual names that were not related to their identities but reflected the culture of each participant and assigned in such a manner as not to compromise their anonymity. These pseudonyms allow the research participants to remain anonymous in their answers to the interview questions and journal prompt entries. Each participant participated in an individual interview via TEAMS and participated in member-checking their transcribed interview to ensure the accuracy and clarity of their responses. None of the participants had any transcript redactions. After conducting each individual interview, I emailed the participants the journal entries. All ten participants completed and emailed the five journal entries back to me. I scheduled two focus groups once all journal entries were received and reviewed. One focus group had four participants, and the other had three. Three participants had to reschedule due to prior work commitments, which resulted in an additional focus group. A sense of comfort and safety was felt in each focus group, allowing each participant to share their perceptions and giving a richer understanding of their shared lived experience of the phenomenon.

Table 1

Educational Leader Participants

Educational Leader Participant	Total Years in Education	Total Years as an Educational Leader	Leadership Role	Type of School
Hannah	20	4.5	Assistant Principal	6th - 8th
Ruth	30+	11	Master Teacher	K - 8th
Noah	10+	6	Master Teacher	6th - 8th
Elizabeth	15	5	Principal	PK - 8th
Samuel	24	5	Teacher Leader Fellow	9th -12th
Naomi	28	7	Teacher Leader Fellow	PK - 8th
Sarah	11	7	Principal	PK -12th
Rebekah	11	4	Master Teacher	PK -5th
John	30	15+	Master Teacher	PK - 8th
Esther	11	2	Dean	9th – 12th

Hannah

Hannah has 20 years of educational experience. She has been the assistant principal at a middle school for the last two and a half years. Before this educational leadership role, she was the master teacher. During her tenure, she obtained her master's degree and worked at the district office as a special education coordinator and social studies teacher. She has always been in the middle school setting and is passionate about being an educator.

Ruth

Ruth has over 30 years in education and has held multiple leadership roles. Currently, she is the master teacher at a K-8th grade school. Education was not her first choice, but throughout her studies, Ruth saw many things needed in schools, so she changed her educational goal and

became a teacher. She was a high school teacher for ten years when she realized she wanted to be an agent of change and decided to get her master's degree in educational administration.

Noah

Noah has over ten years invested as an educator. Through the process provided by the Blue Ocean School District in becoming an educational leader, Noah has a six-year cumulative leadership experience. He has held the leadership titles of instructional lead and content leader, which gave him a platform to encourage his colleagues during cluster meetings. His primary focus has been middle school math, and he is currently a master teacher supporting middle school grade bands for math and science.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is in her fifth year of leadership in a PreK-eighth grade school. Since Elizabeth was a little girl, she knew she wanted to be an educator. After teaching for 12 years, she returned to school to obtain her master's degree in educational leadership, immediately followed by entering a doctoral program in elementary leadership. Her previous leaders planted the seed for leadership during her classroom years; she is now a teacher turned principal.

Samuel

Samuel has been in education for a little over 24 years. He holds two master's degrees and has experience teaching abroad. His background is in foreign languages, and he has been a teacher leader fellow at his current school for the last five years. Going through the district's leadership process, he has been certified as a mentor teacher and now graciously walks alongside his colleagues, providing collegial support and encouragement.

Naomi

Naomi has been an educator for 28 years. She always desired to remain a teacher; however, in her third year of teaching, her principal approached her to join the school's leadership team. Over her tenure, she has been titled cadre leader which is now a teacher leader fellow. Her current leadership role allows her to collaborate with her colleagues, and she has seen how her experience as an educator has allowed her to lead by example.

Sarah

Sarah is in her 11th year as an educator. Though she did not expect a career in education, life steered her in the direction that led her to become an educator. Over this time, Sarah has obtained her master's degree in educational leadership. For the last six years, she has advanced in the district's leadership process ranks and is currently the principal of a PreK-12th grade school.

Rebekah

Rebekah is a master teacher at a PreK-5th grade magnet STEM school. She has held this leadership position for the last four years and has been an educator for eleven years. During this time, Rebekah obtained her master's degree in leadership. Rebekah never dreamed of holding a leadership role due to her drive to perfect what she did in the classroom. However, other leaders and colleagues encouraged her to pursue leadership, resulting in her current leadership role. She is always looking for ways to enrich her career as an educational leader.

John

John began teaching in 1994 and obtained his master's degree in educational administration in 1998. He has over 30 years as an educator and has gone through the district's leadership process, holding a master teacher leadership title for over 15 years. John has mentored

student teachers and seasoned teachers and has had experience in teaching ESL students. John has enjoyed his decision not to become a principal because he can encourage his colleagues and walk through the challenges faced as educators.

Esther

Esther, a dean at a Blue Ocean School District high school, has 11 years of experience working in the K-12 school setting. Though Esther has never been a teacher, she has a bachelor's in psychology, a master's in school counseling, and a doctorate in educational leadership, concentrating in K-12. Her drive for leadership stemmed from her desire to lead and educate teachers on student behavior. She feels alignment in a student's academics would be evident if teachers understood how to address behavioral issues.

Results

I recruited participants and collected data over four weeks upon IRB consent to conduct the study. Data triangulation was used to confirm the finding's validity by using: individual interviews, journal entries, and focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through individual interviews, the foundation describes the educational leaders' lived experience of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices to equip students with 21st-century skills. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using TEAMS embedded Word dictation and varied in time, yet none went over an hour. No new codes were generated by the eighth individual interview, leaving the ninth and tenth individual interviews to confirm the previous code's data; thus, saturation was confirmed. After analyzing the interview data and journal entries, I confirmed that the draft focus group questions were appropriate and scheduled three focus groups. All participants attended one of the three focus groups.

The themes and subthemes which emerged were determined using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis for phenomenological data. I began this process by obtaining a full description of my experience of the phenomenon. I then bracketed my judgments during data collection by applying transcendental phenomenology's epoché methods (Moustakas, 1994). I considered each statement with respect to significance for a description of the experience, which resulted in looking for invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience in nonoverlapping statements. As the primary data analysis instrument, I used Saldañas In Vivo coding to apply codes and kept a code journal.

Throughout this process, I also used memoing, continually referencing my constructed description of the structures of my experience during the analysis process. Once the codes were assigned, I created a code map to assist in the organization of all codes. Themes and subthemes emerged, and a textural-structural description of the participants' experience was constructed. The data were synthesized into seven themes. Table 2 depicts the themes, subthemes, and corresponding codes in the data. The themes presented in this study are 1) student-center learning (SCL) is beneficial, 2) time, 3) Positive student effects, 4) teachers growing pains, 5) relationships are key, 6) agile leadership, and 7) importance of buy-in.

Table 2

Theme Development

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
SCL is Beneficial	Positive Student Effects Voice is Heard/Respected Ownership of Learning	Student Academic Progress Heavy Lifting Work in Progress Benefit is Clear Grows New Teachers Faster Transferable Skills

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Agile Leadership	Recalibration Consistency Teacher Support	Change in Personal Mindset Being Present/Visible Pulse Checks Teacher Needs Top/Down Leadership Supportive
Relationships are Key	Collaborative Partnerships Modeling Expectations Servant Leadership	Accountability Setting Expectations Contagious Attitude Shapes of Collaboration Modeling Others First
Change is Challenging	Mindset Shift	Hard/Scary Resistant at First Doubt in Students'/Teachers' Ability
Teachers Growing Pains	SCL Myths Teacher Differentiation	Know Your Teachers Acceptable Failure Implementation with Fidelity is Misunderstood Vulnerable Together SCL is Not…
Time	Time for Implementation Time for Training	Short Chunks Not Enough PD Seeing SCL in Action
Importance of Buy-In	Leadership Buy-In Teacher Buy-In Student Buy-In	Being a Model Know the True Benefit SCL Must Become Focus

Student-Centered Learning is Beneficial

The primary emerging theme was how beneficial student-centered learning (SCL) is for instilling K-12 students with 21st-century skills. Samuel described it as "Best practice for enterprises today because they want to know how you work on a team and what your

contribution to the team is." All participants agreed during the focus group sessions that 21st-century skills were gained in an SCL environment. All participants noted that though the change from teacher-centered learning (TCL) to SCL was challenging, the benefits of SCL were clear. Sarah shared, "When that shift happened, teachers grew faster and became passionate about how they managed their classrooms, which resulted in students progressing faster despite our slow progress."

Behavioral improvements and improved test scores were also beneficial when SCL is pushed in the classroom. Naomi commented, "Since January of this year, our principal pushed for SCL at our school, and as a result, behavior incidents dropped significantly, and our test scores increased from the fall; this was huge for us." Overall, the participants shared that the shift towards SCL over the last four years was still a work in progress but was indeed the way to go and would ultimately positively impact students. John's perspective was

> "I think it'll be great because a lot of the problem is that our children don't do a lot of thinking for themselves and they don't do any problem-solving. I have seen SCL change the student's mindset about learning and grow teachers."

There was clarity in the participant's understanding of how beneficial SCL has been and will continue to be as it imparts students with 21st-century skills.

Positive Student Effects

Overwhelmingly the participants agreed that SCL was positive for students. Elizabeth remarked, "Students are more engaged. Students are more enthusiastic." Data showed that participants also felt that SCL positively affected students outside of the school. Esther exclaimed, "This is not just a school lesson; this is a life lesson. So, it's transferable outside of the school." Participants shared that when SCL is implemented consistently, classrooms from K-

12 will reap the benefits from this learning environment. Samuel shared, “I think it could only be beneficial for students to grow and gain that mentality of owning their learning and that mentality of being responsible for their learning, and being cooperative as they bring ideas to the class.” All participants not only saw long-term benefits for schools that change to SCL environments but also saw benefits to society as a whole.

Voice is Heard/Respected

One of the characteristics that kept resurfacing during the analysis process was how an SCL environment promotes the voice of students. Ruth, a master teacher with over 30 years of teaching experience, expressed, “I believe the impact is very positive, as I have seen students feel as though their voices are being heard and respected.” Throughout the individual interviews, participants shared their perspectives of what SCL was by describing that it was a learning environment that promoted the student's voice and that students were engaged in conversation, which caused them to use critical thinking skills. John shared that every time he walks into a student-centered classroom, he hears “students giving each other feedback asking each other questions and though not in charge are leading the discussion in the class more than the teacher.”

All the participants remarked that the teacher was the facilitator in an SCL classroom, and most shared how the students drove the class in this learning environment. Noah, a master teacher, captured the consensus of all the participants' views on how a student-centered environment promoted the opportunity for the student’s voices to be respected. Noah said, “SCL is when students have the opportunity to make mistakes which allows for all voices to be appreciated.” Participants recognized that part of students' voices being heard and respected was that in an SCL environment, students could make mistakes. These mistakes were what they said drove student ownership.

Ownership of Learning

One characteristic of SCL consistently seen in data analysis was that students in an SCL classroom take ownership of their learning. Naomi stated, "Students take ownership and decide how some things go in their own educational journey." John echoed Naomi and said, “In this type of learning environment, students can experience not getting everything right as the weight of the lesson is on the students.” A keyword all the participants shared was “heavy lifting” throughout the data collection process. This word consistently revolved around student ownership. Participants described it as when students take ownership, though they fail, they learn from this failure and move forward doing the heavy lifting. The ability for students to learn through trial and error has impacted the teachers and those who are steadily implementing SCL by noticing student growth in critical thinking skills.

In the first focus group, participants highlighted that as students take ownership of their learning, they develop 21st-century skills. Esther said, “Most definitely, as students take ownership of their learning, they are cultivating 21st-century skills.” Sarah replied, “It is those skills that the workplace is wanting to see, and it is on us to encourage an environment that promotes them.” Taking ownership of their learning, as seen through the data collection process, was not just an action taken by students in an SCL environment. It was one that, if cultivated, would encourage the transferability of this skill to the outside world.

Agile Leadership

The second emerging theme revolved around the importance of being a flexible leader. Participants discussed characteristics they felt were needed during this SCL change in their schools and described the need to become agile in their leadership practices. Ruth shared, “My leadership style had to change from just being emotionally intelligent to sometimes being, I

would say, motivational." Both principals shared during their interviews that they felt COVID-19 slowed or completely stopped SCL progress and caused a greater understanding of the importance of leadership in the continuation of SCL implementation. Both principals in this study stated that although the pandemic caused a technology shift in K-12 education, the focus was still on how to make this unplanned change more student-centered. Though none of the participants felt their district ever achieved this, they did feel the change to SCL was ongoing and a must to equip students with skills needed in the 21st century. Upon profoundly reflecting on what phase her school was in, Elizabeth, a principal, said,

> "I think our school is…we hit a setback with SCL during the pandemic because we went full force into technology which we needed at the time, but now…we're returning to it, and though we're not quite there yet, we are moving more to it, and that has meant that as their leader I have needed to be flexible."

All the participants voiced that throughout the past four years, as they have moved towards the implementation process of SCL in their district, many things have changed in K-12 education. Though they see the move to SCL more and more, the pandemic opened their eyes to the importance of being agile in their leadership practices.

Recalibration of Oneself

Modifying the participants' leadership styles was seen as necessary as they continued implementing SCL in their schools. Due to the pandemic, lower-tiered educational leaders in this study voiced that they noticed they, and upper leadership, were hesitant, or in many ways resistant, to the change towards SCL from TCL. Noah, a master teacher, admitted, "Sometimes we ourselves, we're the ones that are so closed off to that notion of failing that when it came to SCL, we just feared failure so much we failed to encourage it." Once back at school after the

pandemic, they shared that they, as leaders, needed a reset. The data focused on this reset, as the participants talked about mindset shifts for themselves as leaders and how their mindset impacted the implementation of SCL in their schools. Reflecting on her resistance to encouraging SCL, Hannah, the only vice-principal in this study, stated,

> "I think we really doubted the teachers more than the kids saying these teachers can't, and then I think that reflected on the teachers saying these students can't. So, now we see that the teachers can do this, and the students can do it."

All participants noted that when they saw that teachers and students could change to an SCL style, they, as leaders needed to adjust their thinking from thinking negatively about the teacher's ability to change to SCL because if not, they would negatively impact the SCL implementation in their schools. Samuel shared, "I need to recalibrate myself by focusing on the tenants of SCL, and for me, that meant focusing on the students' work to provide collegial feedback." As participants concluded their discussion during their focus groups, data revealed that they saw a chain reaction originating with their beliefs that could build or destroy their teachers' efficacy during this ongoing SCL change. Thus, they saw the need to recalibrate.

Consistent Leadership

Participants shared the sentiment that consistency in leadership was vital during pedagogical changes. They attributed the lack of consistency, from the district down to the teacher, to the need-to-know what SCL's implementation should look like in all subjects and grade levels. The participants felt that they needed to be consistent to move forward in the implementation of SCL at their schools and in this district. The bottom line for Ruth was that as a leader, it was necessary "To be consistent every week with teachers." Contrary to the other participants, one participant shared that changing his leadership style would not happen during

the SCL implementation. John said, “I can’t change my style just because I have a difficult time, I have to be consistent in how I relate to my teachers. I have to get them to trust me during our ongoing change towards SCL.” Data did, however, reveal a sense of humility from the principals to the TLFs, in that leaders took responsibility for their doubts impacting the teachers’ and students' attitudes toward the change to SCL.

Supporting Teachers

All participants drew a connection between leadership support, visibility, availability, and teacher output. They felt that these factors indirectly impact student outcomes in an SCL environment. The educational leaders in this study saw the need to conduct regular pulse checks. Data showed that as leaders conducted pulse checks, they could provide a climate of accountability as their schools changed to SCL more and more. Sarah felt that to support teachers it was important to take note of the climate of her school as a principal, “I do believe the heart of everything is the climate of the school, and if all levels of educational stakeholders fail to have that same vision and growth mindset, then SCL will not move in the right direction.” As she continued her discussion on supporting her teachers, she lamented, “I believe leadership truly is top-down, and if we don’t build from the bottom up, then this failure just spreads across everywhere.”

Rebekah, a master teacher who in many schools just like hers holds a position that is just below the principal, remarked on how her leadership style supported her teachers in her interview,

> “My leadership is important on campus because it allows me to help build the capacity of my teachers, strengthens their efficacy, and so they are able to provide for their students.

With over thirty years of leadership, I see teachers need this from those of us who are leaders."

Though their leadership styles varied, all participants shared that how they led and supported teachers would determine if and when their teachers implemented SCL.

Relationships are Key

Data analysis confirmed the need for educational leaders to focus on their relationships with their teachers during pedagogical change. Though leadership levels varied in this study, they all saw that good leadership practices were vital to the continual change to SCL in their schools. Samuel noted, "First, we must build relations with teachers, being supportive of their efforts." In building these relationships with teachers, Elizabeth captured the importance of relationships on her campus, "We must build and maintain trusting relationships with teachers because as a school principal, I am able to indirectly exert a strong impact on student achievement." Participants noted how their attitude and collaboration with other leaders and teachers on their campuses were vital in building relationships that would foster an ongoing change to SCL.

Though the terms used to express having a contagious attitude varied in the interviews, each participant discussed how to build relationships that led to lasting change. Samuel captured this by sharing, "Others just look at what I am doing, and as I do the best job I can, I see that replicated." Ensuring healthy relationships were established, was also important to the participants. Data showed that it was partly due to how their attitude reflected their thoughts on change. During the interview, Sarah considered how her leadership affected those within her school. She shared, "Teachers have observed through the years that my attitude is one that I feel

is contagious, and others notice it, and I can see how they replicate this in their classrooms." Participants were clear that a positive attitude would be contagious on their campuses.

Collaborative Partnerships

An aspect of building relationships was building collaborative partnerships. Every participant saw collaboration as essential during change and vital to the health of leader-teacher relationships. Noah stated, "I think collaboration with teachers is incredibly important. Obviously, it's about building trust which comes through building relationships." Participants shared that modeling SCL would foster more collaboration and allow them to further encourage SCL. During the interview, Hannah shared, "I think that collaboration with the teachers is very important and I need to model that because that is how we build capacity in our school." She further shared that if leaders do not build positive relationships, teachers would not know their leader was there for them. Sarah shared that to curtail this, "I teach them the power of collaboration." Most all the participants had varying views on how they collaborated. However, they all declared how vital it is. As they shared during the focus group sessions, Naomi in the second focus group shared, "If I am not collaborating with my principal or with my teachers, then I have failed to do my job as a leader at my school. It is vital to collaborate just like we are doing in this focus group." Data revealed that though every school was at a different phase in SCL implementation, collaboration was a key factor in supporting and developing teachers throughout this change.

Modeling Expectations

The participants echoed the importance of modeling what was expected of teachers when implementing SCL at the classroom level. Sarah remarked, "An educational leader is being a model for what's expected from them." Due to the uncertainty, the participants saw how to

implement SCL in all courses and grade levels, and it was evident that it was important to model what they meant by SCL implementation, just like it was important to model a positive attitude and the overall expectations in their schools. During a dialogue in the focus group, Ruth shared, "I need to be a model for teachers and students." Elizabeth elaborated, "I have to first exemplify what I'm asking of someone else."

Participants expressed that they model expectations by meeting with other leaders at their schools. In their interviews, participants shared that those weekly meetings known as clusters, created through the district, can provide an opportunity to empower each other in their respective cluster groups, which would help them encourage teachers with ongoing learning of what SCL looks like and sounds. Hannah shared a comment made at her last leadership meeting, "We must focus on strategies to help teachers move away from doing the heavy lifting in the classroom and giving the students ownership in their learning by creating an effective SCL learning environment."

Servant Leadership

Participants recognized that leadership style mattered during times of change. They shared how they sometimes needed to change their leadership styles to encourage an SCL change. Only two participants, however, touched on the importance of servant leadership in building relationships during pedagogical changes. Hannah, an assistant principal, shared during her interview that,

> "I'm very much a servant leader, but I'm also going into the classrooms, and so I have had to change my leadership style to be a little bit more direct with teachers. But I ask them to do only what I would do, I remove barriers for teachers, and I am their sounding board. I walk alongside them."

The participants saw change as tricky, and that small, incremental changes were best as they change to SCL. Additionally, they saw the need to use blended leadership styles to foster trust. Throughout the interview and in her journal entries, Elizabeth, one of the principals in this study, elaborated richly on servant leadership. Elizabeth wrote in her journal entry,

> "Servant leadership is extraordinarily compatible with educational leadership; it is the central, primary, and fundamental moral obligation of educational leaders to serve the best interests of their students, teachers, and communities while attempting to help students mature, become responsible, and learn. It puts others in the organization first and builds trust."

Change is Challenging

It was evident throughout the interviews that participants shared the same feeling toward change, "it was challenging." The participants shared how change was ongoing in academia, but most recently, an unplanned change hit COVID-19. Though the district had already passed on the requirement to change to SCL, the participants felt that for them, their teachers, students, and families, the pandemic made it more challenging to change and caused a need to understand how to continue in this new world. As Sarah shared her perception of SCL, she noted, "That technology shift during COVID-19 caused us as a school to figure out how to engage students and make virtual learning fall in line with SCL tenets." Noah, a master teacher, shared how he encouraged the continual shift to SCL despite the challenges, "Change is difficult, and that resistance/hesitancy was then and still is a challenge and even tougher when you are in a leadership role."

During the interviews, one of the questions asked used the term resistance. One participant, Noah, hesitated to use the term resistance and shared, "I don't know if it was

resistance or hesitancy. Teachers, well even us leaders, hesitated, and I think it was driven by fear." The challenge which fostered hesitancy or resistance to change to SCL, as indicated by the participants, was the need to see the benefits of why the change was needed. John shared, "As a leader, I want to know why I need to encourage change because if I don't understand the reason why change is needed, I will resist." Fear was a term that surfaced throughout the data. The participants unequivocally shared that change was hard and scary, especially if they did not understand the process.

Mindset Shift

Data revealed that every teacher in the participants' schools was at a different level of SCL implementation. Therefore, it was essential to understand their doubts to shift their mindsets. Noah shared, "I think I doubted myself and my teachers. I knew I needed to learn where my teachers were at in the understanding of what SCL looked like and sounded like, and their process or their willingness to learn." Additionally, they shared the difficulty of having teaching vacancies and how during this change to SCL, they realized that not everyone learned the same way and would embrace change. During each focus group, participants freely shared their initial doubts in reflecting on lessons they learned as they changed their pedagogical thinking to SCL. Sarah's response resonated with the others,

> "Still having expectations for teachers has been difficult because sometimes they're not motivated with the same things that motivate me, so you truly have to meet them where they are in order to move away from doubting what could be possible."

Most all participants shared that part of why a mindset shift was needed was due to prior knowledge of what teaching looked like. Though many participants felt they were more SCL-minded, others felt a greater need to shift their mindset to encourage continual SCL

implementation. Hannah shared, “I know as leaders; we wondered if our teachers and students could do it. All it took was for us to shift from doubting ourselves, them, the students to see it was possible.” When sharing his perception of SCL, Noah said, “I think it’s such a shift in the way that a lot of us were taught to teach; even so, it takes a mindset shift, and if we’re willing to make the shift, changes will happen.” Data analysis revealed that when participants allowed SCL data to speak for itself, they saw immediate teacher mindset shifts. Naomi, one of the TLFs in this study, commented, “When we as leaders sat down and showed the teachers test scores after pushing SCL in clusters weekly, I have seen them become more open-minded to what’s in the best interest of the student.”

Teachers Growing Pains

Data revealed that the ongoing pedagogical change in BOSD from TCL to SCL caused growing pains for teachers. Most participants saw that this change was indeed challenging but caused a pedagogical stretching for all educators. As leaders, they shared that some teachers belly ached about changing their teaching habits to incorporate SCL, while others embraced it. Hannah lamented,

> “I’ve seen our teachers resist at first, and some are still a little bit resistant, but I do see movement for that and towards that (SCL), and so I think that it’s just, you know, a positive impact for our school.”

Elizabeth described the teachers’ feelings from a principal perspective “I think teachers feel nervous or anxious about SCL. I would go as far as to say some teachers feel incompetent.” During the data-gathering process, the participants kept making comments that part of the challenge was the lack of information disseminated from the district down to the schools. Naomi,

a TLF, echoed some of the participant's insights, “It’s hard for teachers to let go of control when they don’t understand.”

Participants shared how teachers felt growing pains just like they did. Though they knew they needed to push their schools to change from TCL to SCL, they needed a greater understanding of what it was and how to make it happen. They also had a significant interruption in its implementation when the pandemic hit. Esther, the only dean in the study, shared in her journal entry, “There are times when teachers only need for someone to model a skill and/or lesson for them to implement it and during this process, they need support and encouragement, while provided with ongoing feedback.” Analysis of the data showed that this thought revolved around myths about SCL, and the challenge they faced was convincing their teachers that these myths were just that. Participants felt that being first and foremost educators, maintaining a growth mindset would encourage teachers to grow to meet the needs of the students. Rebekah shared, “It is our responsibility to encourage those teachers carrying all this burden and load on their own by modeling what growth looks like in a school that is student-centered.” Data analysis showed that all participants suggested that teacher growing pains could be addressed with proper leadership.

Student-Centered Myths

Many educational leaders felt teachers were still holding on to SCL myths. Most participants stated that regardless of the teachers' knowledge or lack thereof, teachers resisting the change to SCL were fear-induced due to a lack of SCL knowledge. The participants shared throughout their interviews that they felt their teachers saw SCL as a free-for-all type of classroom setting and that they would need to maintain control and keep to their classroom management plans. Elizabeth remarked, “ I think they might have that misconception that it’s

fluffy, not intense, and you kind of lose a hold on the kids. You lose their attention. But I think that those are all myths."

Most all the participants shared in their journal writings that if allowed to redo their introduction and or initial training of SCL, they would have convinced teachers that as leaders, the focus needed to remain on student success, not the knowledge or skill of teaching their teachers possessed. Noah's response in his journal entry stated this clearly, "If I could redo the process, I would have started earlier, focusing on student moves rather than teacher moves during my feedback to educators." Conclusively, data showed during the interviews and in the focus group discussions that this was the way to combat the myths their teachers believed.

Teacher Differentiation

The participants shared in their interviews that the way to encourage teachers was to know where each teacher was in the implementation process of SCL. Elizabeth stated, "I naturally tiered teachers in my mind based on needs. Just like when I was a teacher, and I knew the needs of my students, I differentiate my support to the teachers based on what I think is most needed to impact students." Knowing what each teacher needed to continue SCL implementation was also discussed. Esther shared, "I believe asking teachers what it is that they specifically need to be more effective with SCL implementation while also providing ongoing PD to better teachers and their skills is what we need to do." Data revealed that the participants felt that if they stepped back and allowed the teacher to try, fail, and try again, each teacher would learn from this process. According to Ruth, "It is learning through our failures. As a teacher, I learned to do this while differentiating for my students; by applying the same concept, our teachers grow."

Time

Participants shared that if proper implementation was expected it could only occur with adequate time to be trained and to train. During her interview, Rebekah shared her thoughts on the amount of professional development surrounding SCL,

> "Although, as educational leaders, we trickle down our understanding of SCL through what little professional development we've had, I do feel like there is a lack of time that teachers are given to be able to practice and apply and actually implement the things that we're asking them to do."

Not one participant felt enough time was dedicated to learning what the district meant by implementing SCL across subjects and grade levels. Participants repeatedly shared that they follow what they know as a safety mechanism as educators. As a TLF, Samuel shared, "Teachers need to be given the time and the space to shift their practices because, as a teacher, we tend to teach in the way we were taught, which creates inertia and reluctance to change." When asked the final question during the focus group sessions, most of the participants shared the need for time with frustration. Esther articulated the consensus of the focus group discussion, "More time is needed for reflection, more time for collaboration, more time to train teachers, and that time to train needs to be continuous both with teachers and leaders despite our experience in education." The participant groups shared that time was essential as this district continues to move toward SCL.

Time for Implementation

Participants shared that leaders, teachers, and students all need time to understand the process of how to implement SCL. They shared that chunking the time was the best way to accomplish this in their schools. Noah said, "We've tried to make SCL teaching opportunities

like very specific moments, you know, so saying like we're going to take these 10 minutes and make them bit-size moments." The participants shared that even students needed time to adapt to an SCL environment. John shared, "When students are given time to interact with content rather than be spoken to about content, it becomes more meaningful and relevant." Data showed that SCL implementation across the district has been progressing slowly, and as educators, they needed to take one thing at a time. Naomi exclaimed in the focus group that teachers are asking for more time to "manage and tweak the curriculum." Sarah mentioned, "There is an overemphasis on data and an underemphasis on the organization of schools being a community." This community talk was seen throughout the data analysis as being connected to the time needed for the proper implementation of SCL in their schools.

Time for Training

Participants were steady in their appeal for more time to train teachers and students. In reflecting on the challenges Noah faced during the adoption and implementation phase of SCL, he remarked,

> "More embedded professional development around the matter, allowing teachers to see and hear what SCL looks like from veteran teachers, and play upon the strengths that teachers already have in the classroom. It is certainly a process to implement SCL, so small changes make big impacts."

The participants shared that district professional development (PD) was nonexistent, creating difficulty mitigating personal and teacher resistance. John wrote in his journal entry, "At the beginning of implementation, SCL was less articulated at the district level." Though the data showed that all the participants saw this, they felt there were apparent gaps in PD when it came to clearly understanding what SCL looks like throughout subjects and grade levels.

The two principals, vice principal, and dean, all felt that out of all leadership, master teachers had the most SCL training. Nevertheless, they all agreed that even this training given to master teachers was not enough to encourage the proper implementation of SCL. Overall, there was frustration, almost resentment, as to the little training they have all had and what is offered. Most of the participants said it had been a trial-and-error process and one they hope will change since the district's direction is to continue with SCL implementation.

Importance of Buy-In

To continue and perfect SCL implementation in their schools, the participants felt that buy-in was a considerable piece. Though not directly asked in any of the data-gathering processes, all the participants shared that if teachers, leaders, and even students did not buy into the SCL change, there would be resistance or hesitation to move in that direction. Samuel wrote in his journal entry,

> " You have to believe. You have to believe in what you're doing, and you have to stick it out for a good amount of time before you see any changes and it may not happen immediately, so it's understanding and believing that the change is going to happen in order to see buy-in."

In the individual interviews, participants highlighted the importance of agile leadership style to encourage change to SCL. Trust was a word that surfaced throughout their discussions on building relationships and being an agile leader, and each time they mentioned buy-in. Ruth explained that,

> "If you don't have trust, you won't get people to believe anything. Buy-in is real, and I don't want to, I'm trying to be positive in my delivery, but if you are an ineffective leader and they don't like you, you won't get anything. You have to be likable."

It was evident in the data that leaders saw their need to lead effectively so that their teachers and students buy into the ongoing SCL change in their schools.

Leadership Buy-In

As leaders, the participants knew that if their teachers and students were to buy into the SCL change, they also had to. John said in his interview, "For me personally, it's having more confidence in myself because if you don't try it out yourself, you're never gonna know the ends and outs of what it is that you're trying to teach them." In addition, participants shared throughout all three forms of data that they knew SCL was the way to go but that their buy-in of SCL was vital. Rebekah stated,

> "I think at this moment, if it never was necessary before, I think that we're in a time now where you know, it's necessary for us to kind of shift in that direction. So, because I do feel like it can be very empowering for our kids, and knowing that they are our futures, I need to show my buy-in of SCL to my teachers."

The participants shared that as leaders in their schools, it was essential to understand why change to SCL was needed and be able to express the "why" to their teachers. They also shared the need to understand the how-to of its implementation to get their teachers to buy in. They shared in all three forms of data that more than they, as leaders, teachers needed to see the benefits of embracing SCL and that this required being an agile leader.

Teacher Buy-In

The participants mentioned the need for teachers to see the outcome of SCL to buy into this pedagogy. They all shared that if there was to be a practical implementation of SCL, their teachers had to understand the benefits and see the results. During the interview, Elizabeth stated,

> "At first, some are hesitant, but once they do it and they see how well the kids do and how engaged they are, I think they feel proud and more encouraged, and this is something I want to make a standard practice in my classroom."

In addition, throughout the interviews, participants shared that changing the constructs of classrooms was important for teachers to understand how SCL would benefit them. Esther said, "Teachers want to know how this will affect them because they won't buy into it if they don't see the benefits." Naomi furthered the sentiment by saying, "You have to get those teachers to buy into it, and it won't happen overnight, but it'll happen eventually." Throughout data collection, the participants shared that the more teachers understood the benefits of SCL, the easier the change and buy-in of SCL in their classrooms and schools has been and would continue to be.

Student Buy-In

The participants remarked that because students are the main priority in K-12 education, their understanding and buy-in of SCL were necessary to succeed in this learning environment. Most participants described student buy-in as an essential factor in implementing SCL. In his journal writing, Samuel expressed this sentiment: "It's true, time is needed, and training is too. We need to train the students and convince them about the method…the how and the why." Data continued to reveal that as students were convinced of the importance of this change to SCL, they wanted it more and expected it across every subject. John shared during his interview, "Once the students get into the flow of SCL, they get excited; they expect every class to go the same way." The educational leaders in this study knew that buy-in at all three levels was indeed vital to the ongoing change to SCL.

Table 3

Themes, Research Questions, and Evidence

Themes	Research Questions	Evidence
SCL is Beneficial	CRQ, SQ2	Hannah "SCL is a positive thing. I think that its, creating a way for students to be more critical thinkers, and they can bring that into their future." Noah "When students are given time to interact with content rather than be spoken to about content, it becomes more meaningful and relevant to students."
Agile Leadership	CRQ, SQ2	Ruth "I believe that we can be a blend of different leadership styles."
Relationships are Key	CRQ, SQ1, SQ2	Elizabeth "I think that if those things are in place, if there's trust in the teacher/principal relationship, then you reap the benefits of that."
Change is Challenging	CRQ, SQ1, SQ3	Elizabeth "Sometimes we get stuck in the old traditional thoughts about education, and we ignore the research about how kids learn best."
Teachers Growing Pains	SQ1,SQ3	Ruth "In order to remove the teachers' negative outlook is to tell them why they are doing this. Nothing else ever works, so you have to make sure that they understand this is where education is going."
Time	CRQ, SQ1, SQ2	Samuel "In order to be more effective, I think I should be given more physical time during the week to play a more proactive

Themes	Research Questions	Evidence
Importance of Buy-In	CRQ, SQ1, SQ2	role, anticipate more, better identify the trends and the pattern in the teachers' thinking and their conception of teaching." Ruth "Once everyone can buy in, I do see it as a positive thing, but the buy-in is the big part from the leaders to the teachers to the students." John "Teachers don't know what's true and what's not true as far as what's effective and what's not effective, and until you go and model for them or you have them track data that they don't see the change until they start believing and then seeing that the change is possible."

Research Question Responses

This study aimed to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices for Louisiana K-12 educational leaders to equip students with 21st-century skills. The data collected during the study was designed to answer one central and three sub-research questions. Data was collected through interviews, five journal entries, and three focus group discussions. This section contains the research questions and their corresponding answers.

Central Research Question

How do educational leaders describe their experiences and perceptions of changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices in their K-12 schools? Overall, the participants described changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices as beneficial. Terms the participants shared throughout the focus group sessions described this change as exciting, has allowed growth, successful in that progress, though slow, must be celebrated, and as leaders, they saw it as rewarding. The participants' experience has been one that although the

implementation of SCL looks different in each classroom, it is occurring. Sarah remarked in her interview,

> "So, I think we're kind of in that middle, you know, SCL implementation is not a beginning stage, but we haven't mastered it yet. I think there is still a lot of growth for teachers and students as well, but we are keeping that in the forefront."

Participants felt that change is always a challenge, so proper time and agility in the leadership is necessary for the implementation of SCL in this school district to move away from it being slow-moving and begin to progress faster. The educational leaders perceived time was essential for proper, ongoing, and SCL-focused professional development to move from teacher-centered to student-centered practices in every core subject and throughout the grade levels. Naomi shared,

> "I haven't seen how they have offered something district-wide or even pocket-wise. I think we take the NIET rubric and we study it, but that's just a piece of paper. Like, we're not looking at it, if that makes sense on that level of development that we need to make it soar."

The participants described these themes with a sense of hope mixed with frustration. As leaders, they see the beneficial outcome of SCL implementation to prepare students for the 21st-century workforce. However, without the district clarifying what the implantation of SCL with fidelity is to look like, regardless of making cluster meetings SCL oriented, there would be a challenge in getting teachers, other leaders, and even students to buy in.

Sub-Question One

How do educational leaders perceive the effect of the change process on SCL practices at the classroom and building levels? Overall, the participants perceived the effect of this change in their schools as positive for the students but one that began with growing pains for some of the

participants, their upper leadership, and many of their teachers. Participants overwhelmingly shared that students in an SCL classroom were beginning to be equipped with transferable skills and thrived in this learning environment. Rebekah presented this clearly, “When students have an opportunity to be in an SCL environment, they become more engaged, more involved in the process, and they develop skills that they can use beyond their schooling with us. I would say that it’s overall a positive effect on students.”

Participants perceived the overall effect at the building level to be filled with challenges due to a need to understand how to adjust their curriculums and teaching styles to be more SCL. Some participants termed this a growing pain for teachers. The participants shared that this was due to teachers being stuck in the mindset created by what they were taught and believing myths of what SCL was. Ruth shared during her interview,

> “I saw that we didn’t make sure that the teachers understood what that looked like first, so in this change, it was like ripping off the Band-Aid of their old style of teaching. We all needed to see that it isn’t losing control in our classrooms but that it was a different way to teach and learn. Both teachers and students become the students. I would say we as leaders became students and still are as we try to understand how to change to SCL. This is a positive change impacting our schools, and we see it in student behavior and student scores.”

Sub-Question Two

How do K-12 educational leaders perceive their role in encouraging a mindset change from a teacher focus to a student-centered focus through its implementation across subjects? Unanimously, they felt that mindset changes from TCL to SCL needed to be accompanied by time to be trained and then time to implement. The participants felt that buy-in would last if time

was given. They saw that changing teachers' mindsets and how they presented their encouragement mattered because it was necessary for this change. Samuel stated,

> "The degree of importance of collaboration with teachers as a leader is extremely high. Because we all share the same students, collaborating during this change to SCL is very important to know what we are doing in our classrooms and what is working with the students, and the type of activities that are more successful and beneficial for students. This takes knowing your teachers and how to come alongside them in a collegial manner because it achieves buy-in. I feel this takes time for them to learn…it always goes back to time."

When it came to SCL implementation across subjects, they spoke about how some curriculums were more SCL geared than others. Noah voiced,

> "As a math and science lead, I see how some curriculums lend more towards SCL implementation. So as a leader, I need to encourage teachers by having them see how they can do things to make their lessons more SCL in nature. This, of course, is challenging because it is difficult to change a teacher's mindset when they feel what they are doing is effective."

During the focus groups, the participants shared how they saw the need as leaders on their campuses to be motivational and flexible in their leadership styles, and having experience was a bonus.

Sub-Question Three

What leadership practices do K-12 educational leaders find effective in mitigating personal resistance throughout the process of changing from a TCL mindset to encouraging and enforcing the implementation of SCL within their schools? The participants shared that their

leadership style had to change to mitigate resistance when encouraging and enforcing the implementation of SCL. However, their experience on how they experienced personal resistance to SCL varied. Lower-level leadership felt they needed recalibration within themselves. Rebekah, a master teacher, shared,

> "So, probably up until this school year, I've kind of had a shift in my own mindset and step back, and I need to step into their shoes and be in their role so that I can have a clear vision of what that actually will look like for you to create a student-centered environment. But I have had to come to realize what processes and thinking are required to be able to do things successfully in this type of learning environment, so definitely being willing to be the model was what I knew needed to be done."

The upper-level leadership perceived they were more SCL-minded from the beginning of the change process than teachers or students were. Therefore, they did not feel they had to mitigate personal resistance but teacher resistance. Elizabeth, one of the principals, shared,

> "I don't ever remember feeling resistant towards SCL because when I think about my experiences with kids before I was a teacher, I always did things that were student-centered, and so I think I have a natural inclination and don't think I ever had any personal resistance because I think I always felt instinctual that this was the best way for optimal student outcomes but for my teachers, I have seen more resistance at first but had to show them we were not going to throw the baby out with the bath water, we are just implementing more SCL than we were implementing before."

Most participants felt they needed to be flexible in their leadership styles to encourage further implementation of SCL, which meant having and maintaining a growth mindset. During the interview, Ruth said it was sometimes necessary to "lead with emotional intelligence but be

quick to be more motivational but with a strong hand." One of the principals and the vice principal participants in this study shared how they saw more success when they, as leaders, embraced a mix of servant leadership and other leadership styles, such as situational leadership. Elizabeth shared during the interview that situational leadership was "highly adaptable to what that person needs." Yet, in her journal entry, Elizabeth wrote,

"Servant leadership, fostering trusting relationships with teachers, and instructional coaching – these are all the most effective leadership styles that can drive a shift to SCL on a school campus."

Summary

This chapter outlined the findings of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study's findings on the lived experiences of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders at Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. The chapter included three tables, Table 1: Participant Descriptions, Table 2: Theme Development and Themes, concluding with Table 3: Themes, Research Questions, and Evidence. Further, the results section presented the findings of this study using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis with in vivo evidence. The results section indicated seven themes and 17 subthemes. The themes were 1) SCL is beneficial, 2) agile leadership, 3) relationships are key, 4) change is challenging, 5) teachers growing pains, 6) time, and 7) importance of buy-in. Five of the themes supported the central research question and four sub-questions, with one theme supporting the central research question and all three sub-questions. Though the change to SCL was challenging, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a setback in SCL implementation in this school district, and it made leaders shift their leadership style to continue the implementation of SCL in

their schools. Participants acknowledged the fact that leadership style was important in encouraging the implementation and adoption of student-centered learning in their schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders to equip students with 21st-century skills. A group of 10 educational leaders served as participants in this study. This chapter synthesizes the entirety of the study by summarizing the thematic findings with detailed interpretations integral in showcasing K-12 educational leaders' lived experience with the change to student-centered learning (SCL). An explanation of the implications for policy and practice is discussed, followed by the theoretical and methodological implications. Limitations, delimitations, and recommendations for future research will follow. Concluding this chapter will be a summary of the entire study.

Discussion

This transcendental phenomenological research study explored the lived experiences of K-12 educational leaders at Blue Ocean school district (BOSD), changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices to equip students with 21st-century skills. This section discusses the study's findings in light of the seven themes and 17 sub-themes that emerged through the data analysis. This discussion is relevant today to address the challenges educational leaders experience when a planned change is required (changing from teacher-centered learning (TCL) to SCL) and an unplanned change (COVID-19 pandemic) occurs, causing setbacks in implementing the required pedagogy. In order to be successful, educational leaders must have time to understand what SCL is and how to implement it with fidelity via consistent professional development and an agile leadership style.

Interpretation of Findings

This section examines the thematic findings discussed in Chapter Four, followed by my interpretations of the study. Seven themes emerged from the data analysis process. These themes included: 1) SCL is beneficial, 2) agile leadership, 3) relationships are key, 4) change is challenging, 5) teachers growing pains, 6) time, and 7) importance of buy-in. The themes describe the lived experiences of educational leaders' change process from TCL to SCL. The breadth and depth of the overarching themes were achieved through the sub-themes which followed each theme. The themes and sub-themes that emerged were vital to the understanding of educational leaders' lived experiences with the phenomenon of change from TCL to SCL.

The participants explained the change from TCL to SCL as a challenging but positive change at the classroom and building levels. Educational leaders described SCL in various ways yet concluded that it was a positive change in equipping students with 21st-century skills yet a challenge due to needed mindset changes. According to the participants, SCL is surrounded by many myths that have caused educators to hesitate or resist the change. The lack of time educators have had to understand what SCL is and how to implement it across subjects with fidelity has caused them to hold on to these myths. They further stated that agile leadership was vital to a continual change to SCL as this would encourage buy-in from other leaders and teachers in their schools. In addition, the upper-level leaders in this study saw how the COVID-19 pandemic caused a setback in SCL implementation. Finally, they shared how they felt that district support for them as leaders, especially for their teachers was of utmost importance if they were to continue the change to SCL. The participants shared suggestions that would equip them and their teachers with the skills they need to have a lasting change to SCL at both the classroom and building levels. Below, further interpretations of the themes and sub-themes are provided.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Ten public school educational leaders whose K-12 experience ranged from 10 to 30 years and educational leadership experience ranged from two to over 15 years were interviewed and asked 18 questions. The ten educational leaders who participated in the focus group sessions were asked seven additional questions and responded to five journal entries. All 30 questions were tied to either the central research question or sub-questions. The subsequent summary and findings describe the themes derived from the central research question and three sub-questions: 1) How do educational leaders describe their experiences and perceptions of changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices in their K-12 schools, 2) How do educational leaders perceive the effect of the change process on SCL practices at the classroom and building levels, 3) How do K-12 educational leaders perceive their role in encouraging a mindset change from a teacher focus to a student-centered focus through its implementation across subjects, 4) What leadership practices do K-12 educational leaders find effective in mitigating personal resistance throughout the process of changing from a teacher-centered learning mindset to encouraging and enforcing the implementation of student-centered learning within their schools? The central research question with the three sub-questions allowed the essence of the participants' experiences to be captured.

Building Relationships Grounded in Trust. The themes and sub-themes generated from the data analysis made it evident that educational leaders saw the importance of building relationships grounded in trust to combat the continual hesitation/resistance for their schools to move forward in the change to SCL at the classroom and building level. Research has shown that teachers have a relationship with educational leaders because they are seen as equal (Fossland & Sandvoll, 2021), causing them to feel free to share pedagogical issues (Visone, 2020). This study

showed that leaders at various levels need to form relationships grounded in trust to get their followers to buy into the change to SCL or express their issues during it. Elizabeth shared in the focus group session, “I see it as when an organization has a climate fostering high trust, members are more inclined to be open and willing to share ideas. This is important when there is uncertainty in why change is needed.” In agreement, John stated, “If the teachers don’t trust us as their leaders, they won’t open up. I know for me if I don’t work for a leader whom I trust, I hesitate to share.”

Trust in the leader-teacher relationship is key, and how one articulates information is crucial during times of change. In a further discussion during the focus group, Elizabeth shared, “One thing we say wrong can damage the relationship.” Data was precise that educational leaders needed to have leadership skills that fostered trust to enforce a change from TCL to SCL. Ruth shared in her interview, “I need to be visible, a model for them, do pulse checks, talk to teachers and students about things we need to do to grow and celebrate.” Further, in the focus groups, the participants spoke about the need to be open and willing to change their mindsets to continue to nurture trusting relationships. Samuel said, “If we don’t have trust, they won’t listen.” Noah remarked, “As educators, we can get stuck in outdated mindsets of teaching if we fail to see the why, and that only hinders any form of change.”

Literature shows how a change in mindset is needed during organizational change (Bligh et al., 2018), especially when the organization is moving toward a student-centered strategic, and proactive form of learning (Eady et al., 2021; Plotinsky, 2022). This mindset change was seen throughout the data analysis but not just for them as leaders. They saw that mindsets for all stakeholders needed to change towards SCL if implementation was to be successful. Educational leaders in this study voiced that when they worked in or developed a climate in their schools that

was grounded in trust, the change from TCL to SCL was exciting. Data analyzed from the interviews showed evidence that there were positive effects when the implementation of SCL occurred in their schools. Journal writings furthered this notion and added that relationships grounded in trust would allow for growth and, in turn, life learning. Leaders must build relationships grounded in trust to be effective in the change from TCL to SCL.

Trust is essential in any form of relationship. Trust, however, is earned, and through the data collection process and listening to the participants disclose their experiences with the change to SCL, it was even more evident that educational leaders' outlook on trust was twofold. Not only must they earn the trust of their followers if they want to see change, but also that they must trust the district leaders to provide what was needed to encourage this change. The change was seen as challenging, and at some points, frustration was in their voices and seen as fearful for the teachers. Because of this, educational leaders felt that the district needed to build trust again with their educators. Hannah described it in her journal entry, “The implementation has not been effective because the leaders and teachers were not made aware of the shift or expectations from the district.” Though described loosely as a school being a family by Sarah in the discussion group, participants shared that if they were expected to do something in their schools, and they were doing their part by building relationships grounded in trust, their desire was for their district to do the same for them. That is why leadership during times of change matters.

Leaders Want and Need Professional Development. Successful implementation of SCL requires time (Lee & Branch, 2018). For educational leaders to be influential in addressing resistance to change, time must be given for teachers to develop new routines that support the change to SCL. Tran and Gandolfi (2020) depict this through Lewin’s theory of Change. In the first phase of the change process, unfreezing, there is a re-education that occurs; it is here where

a leader can introduce the change and the reason why change is needed. However, participants noted that there was never a point in this change process when they, as leaders, were given enough time to understand what SCL should look like across grade levels and classrooms, which impacted how they encouraged its implementation. In her journal entry, Hannah shared,

> "Teachers need to be given a PD to define and introduce SCL. The expectation is there but leaders nor teachers have had any introduction to SCL from the district. Teachers need to know what it looks and sounds like so they can implement it. Even our best teachers struggle with the implementation because they are either researching it on their own or doing what they perceive SCL to be."

This evidence is consistent with prior research that showed how hesitation due to lack of knowledge prevents a teacher from embracing an SCL environment (Leatemia et al., 2022).

A move to a new level can only be made by developing new behaviors and attitudes, giving an allowance for reflection as to what may be hindering the change (Lewin, 1947; Tran & Gandolfi, 2020). The data showed that the initial resistance to change and the slow progress in changing to SCL at the building level was multi-leveled. Within the three focus groups, it was clear that leaders wanted to be trained correctly by the district so that their message to their teachers could provide a clear definition of what is meant by implementing SCL with fidelity across grade levels and subjects and be able to model this and reflect on what works and what does not through consistent collaboration. Ruth shared, "Change is challenging. And let's face it, this is something that is new to everyone." With no real or consistent PD, the participants felt that as leaders, they carried the burden of encouraging SCL, but all felt limited to only what they thought it was.

Throughout the data, it was clear that the participants saw buy-in as real and would only occur at any level if they, as educators, understood what they were buying into. The principals and the vice-principal noted that COVID-19 impacted PD regarding SCL. However, all participants noted that though an unplanned change occurred, there still needed to be more consistent and effective PD for all levels of educators. Even with the district changes incorporating the NIET rubric for teacher evaluations, they saw it as a paper that needed more clarity. They also shared that they needed more time for proper SCL PD and more time to practice it. Research has shown that teachers and students need the time to practice the process of an SCL pedagogy as it can be time-consuming and require additional resources, which are only sometimes readily available to schools (Fisher, 2021).

When asked in the focus groups what needs to be done differently, Esther, Sarah, Ruth, and Noah said, “Training and compensation.” As they explained, it is not PD as usual that is wanted and needed, and they are expecting their time to be valued and be provided with PD that has clarity and is purposeful in how to encourage SCL implementation across core subjects and electives as well as across grade levels. Noah remarked, “I think when we hear PD, we all say…Not another one.” Sarah responded, “Yes, it needs to be intentional! Just like we are expected to be intentional with our differentiation with our students, we must also be with our teachers, and the district needs to be with us.” Ruth then shared grudgingly, “To be honest, compensation works for all teachers and is a means of encouraging change when there is a need for teachers in our schools, and let's face it, we bear the burden of failure as leaders of our schools.” I believe that these findings solidify the fact that professional development is needed and wanted by educational leaders if SCL is to be the new normal in BOSD.

Implications for Policy or Practice

This study revealed practical implications for policy and practice through the triangulation of data sources. BOSD relies on the NIET rubric to support the implementation of SCL in their schools. However, data showed that only educational leaders termed master teachers benefit from this training and support. BOSD should consider applying this rubric and the research from this study and form collaborative relationships with all levels of educational leaders to formulate best practices for SCL professional development. The following sections provide recommendations for policies and practices.

Implications for Policy

If SCL is the new pedagogical standard, then all components of SCL should be clarified. A significant implication for policy revealed in the findings supports a need for effective professional development (PD). In this study, 100% of the participants revealed that they did not receive adequate training or support when the change to SCL began, more so for the teachers in their schools that were expected to implement SCL with fidelity. Educational leaders in this study relied on their limited experience in agile leadership and sought knowledge on SCL across various sources without any confirmation of validity from the district. Due to the size of BOSD, which has over 283 educational leaders as of January 2023, and its reliance on the NIET rubric to educate leaders (principals, vice-principals, and master teachers), the district may benefit from a policy that mandates the provision of initial and ongoing professional development and supports for teachers in the ongoing change to SCL. Further, the findings support that additional policy to support leaders with further SCL implementation since the pandemic ceased most progress and added a level of confusion would allow them to clarify and streamline the expectations for its

implementation. Defining the roles and responsibilities of the educational leaders in BOSD concerning SCL can increase the buy-in from teachers and students across the district.

BOSD should also consider allowing educators to see an effective SCL environment. There must be time to return to their schools (building or classroom level) to practice what is learned. Feedback must be given promptly from the district level to the teacher level. Leadership in BOSD must take the time to celebrate growth and use this time to continue to model expectations. States desiring to change pedagogy to reflect tenets of SCL must develop a protocol that allows for a specified time for educators to be equipped with the knowledge as to what SCL looks like and sounds like at each grade level and throughout all subjects as well as be allowed time for implementation. Educators in this district were frustrated at the lack of knowledge and time given for application. Moreover, if effective PD regarding SCL implementation is provided, they may consider policies regarding time for implementation to support educators through the SCL change process.

Implications for Practice

BOSD has been in the process of changing from TCL to SCL for the last five years. While it is clear that SCL is beneficial at both the building and classroom levels, BOSD should strategically plan how to apply the seven tenets of SCL with particular attention to ensuring trust is built, and leaders cultivate an atmosphere within their schools that supports these tenets. All ten participants referenced the importance of collaboration and transparency in successfully changing to SCL. Thus, districts should establish a practice for seeking input from all levels of educational leaders when a change in pedagogy is needed. This practice may also remove obstacles related to other leaders resisting or hesitating in encouraging the implementation of SCL. Additionally, it may reduce any lingering teacher resistance to implementing SCL. When

supervision concentrates on improving teacher motivation and desire for professional development increases, as does their confidence in their leadership (Ergün, 2022).

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This transcendental phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of educational leaders in the process of changing from a TCL environment to an SCL environment at the building and classroom levels. With ample research sharing the voice of the teacher and student during a change in SCL, this study sought to conduct further research on educational leaders, as posed by McPherson in his 2020 study and the 2017 article by Ryan and Cox. This study confirmed some leadership research during pedagogical change (Boies & Fiset, 2019; Conan Simpson, 2021; Desimone, 2009; Hussain et al., 2018; Keiler, 2018; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Onurkan & Özer, 2017; Owen & Wong, 2022; Sebastian et al., 2017; Tsuyuguchi et al., 2020) and brought an expansion to the current literature by highlighting the voice of an educational leader during an ongoing change to SCL.

Theoretical Implications

This study was shaped and corroborated by the theory of change (Lewin, 1947). The theory of change (Lewin, 1947) provides a valuable framework for addressing the phenomenon in this study as it highlights three phases of change: unfreeze, move, and refreeze. The purpose of the actual change initiative in BOSD was to develop a conducive classroom environment for the implementation of SCL to equip students with 21st-century skills. However, the educational leader participants in this study shared their frustrations regarding how this change has been conducted at the district level. They felt that there never was a formal introduction to SCL, consistent professional development, or time given to see a successful adoption of SCL. Thus,

for some participants and almost all of their teachers, the unfreezing phase of change has been a slow process with much trial and error.

The ability to manage change is seen as a core competence of a successful organization (Burnes, 2004). This study showed how, as educational leaders, they quickly realized that there was a need to be agile in their leadership to breed success throughout the ongoing implementation of SCL. The data showed that change was challenging, and mindsets needed to be unfrozen to move to the expectation of SCL implementation. Participants in this study, saw it as a greater challenge in encouraging the change to SCL in their schools if they lacked the ability to be agile in their leadership and knowledge of SCL. Lewin's change theory was an appropriate theory to frame this study as it shed light on how only when leadership re-educates at a group level (unfreeze) will they then develop a new perspective (move phase) and then be able to stabilize in the new pedagogy (refreeze phase).

Empirical Implications

This study was designed to close an existing gap in the literature that explores educational leaders' lived experiences changing to SCL to equip students with 21st-century skills. By using the transcendental phenomenological research approach used in this study, the lived experiences of K-12 educational leaders were captured. The findings of this study revealed similarities between my study and the existing literature and added new knowledge to SCL implementation from the perspective of a leader. McPherson (2020) called for further research on the impact of SCL on principals. Empirical research on SCL shows that when implemented SCL is beneficial (Kaput, 2018; Matsuyama et al., 2019; Shaalan, 2019) and is more conducive to providing students with 21st-century skills as opposed to TCL (Kim et al., 2019; Tandika, 2022; Tapilouw et al., 2021).

Research from this study extends these ideas but from the voice of an educational leader. They noted that SCL was beneficial, but as far as their roles as leaders, they saw it as challenging and more so due to the pandemic. Upper-level leadership not only had to provide asynchronous support for their teachers, students, and community they were tasked to ensure lessons were kept in line with SCL. Literature shows that leadership support is vital (Bonner et al., 2020; Eronen & Kärnä, 2018; Green, 2021; Onurkan & Özer, 2017) during the change to SCL. This study supports the literature and adds that it is the type of leadership that matters. This study added to the literature by showing how building trusting and collaborative relationships must come before the change from TCL to SCL, as reported by the participants. Empirically, this study offers findings to support leadership styles and mindsets toward change matter if an organization is to have lasting change. The literature describes principals as human capital managers (Belay et al., 2021) who must be fully committed to the change process (Gebretsadik, 2022) and demonstrate positive behaviors (Meyer et al., 2022; The Wallace Foundation, 2013) to see results within their schools. This study found that though there was evidence that agile leadership was vital, servant leadership, as expressed by several participants, provided safety (Crippen & Willows, 2019), and allowed their teachers to see failure as acceptable more so than in other leadership settings. Further, this study provides insight into perspectives that may work to influence professional development, which may reduce the challenges educational leaders face during pedagogical change and are highlighted in the research.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled. This study contained minimal limitations or weaknesses. A small sample size of only 10 educational leaders is congruent with phenomenology research which encourages 10-20 participants for individual

interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this qualitative phenomenological research, the ten participants represented an even distribution of various leadership roles, ethnicities, grade levels, and years of experience. Saturation was achieved after the eighth participant leaving participants nine and ten only to confirm the themes. It is my opinion that the delimitations of the study did not have a negative effect on the research.

Delimitations are defined as "what a researcher includes and excludes to make a project manageable and focused on the research question" (Coker, 2022, p. 141). Since I was able to recruit at least one educational leader in each of the leadership roles, and all of them had been active in their role as leaders for no less than two years, I think this allowed for a rich depiction of the participants' experiences, which enhanced the findings. The participants I chose to include had experience with the phenomenon and covered leading teachers from pre-kindergarten through the 12th grade in the Blue Ocean School District (pseudonym). Another delimitation of the study was the intentional decision to follow a transcendental phenomenology methodology rather than a hermeneutic. Therefore, though I had experience with many aspects of this phenomenon, I bracketed my personal bias and refrained from co-constructing meaning, relying only on the meaning provided by the participants and maintaining a non-biased interpretation that followed (Moustakas, 1994).

Recommendations for Future Research

Student-centered learning is a pedagogy utilized in elementary, middle, high, and post-high school settings. I recommend that studies of this nature focus on the needed professional development in each of these grade levels. One such direction would be to research any existing training programs to see if they would be effective in all grade levels and across content or if tapping into other programs for different grade levels and or content areas would be more

appropriate to ensure SCL implementation is successful. Research has shown that professional development is necessary (Lunn Brownlee et al., 2019; Peurach et al., 2019) to ensure that educational leaders and teachers understand what SCL looks like and sounds like when teaching and learning (McPherson, 2021). Therefore, future research (quantitative or mixed studies) needs to consider the need for PD and perhaps design an effective PD program to equip educators with the knowledge of what SCL is, looks like, and sounds like in each grade level and across content areas. Additionally, this study showed that educational leaders needed to be agile during this ongoing change to SCL; however, it may vary for other school districts as they consider the type of leadership needed for such a pedagogical change. Future research on the leadership type best suited for successful SCL implementation is also encouraged.

Considering the study findings, the connection between professional development and the time needed to practice what is learned is vital. It is, therefore, another recommendation for future researchers to delve into. I also recommend incorporating clear definitions of what fidelity means from the district level. For example, participants in this study voiced that there needed to be a clear meaning of what implementing SCL with fidelity meant. Therefore, explicating what this term fidelity means in relation to SCL at the different grade levels would be efficacious in what needs to be taught in an SCL-oriented PD. With growing evidence on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted academia, I think it would be beneficial to study the effects of incorporating SCL in an asynchronous learning environment. This study found that though BOSD was enforcing the change to SCL when the pandemic hit, it changed the course of learning, and they did not know how to make asynchronous learning more student-centered. Therefore, future research would be beneficial on this topic.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders at the Blue Ocean school district in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. The research was based on Lewin's change theory, which undergirds the premise that as individuals embrace change, they are better equipped to support the vision of why change is needed, ultimately leading to lasting change. BOSD was an appropriate school district setting with over four years of experience in change from TCL to SCL across grade levels and core subjects. Ten educational leaders from seven schools in BOSD with no less than two years of leadership experience described their lived experiences to answer the central research question, "How do educational leaders describe their experiences and perceptions of changing from teacher-centered to student-centered practices in their K-12 schools?" Data were analyzed through Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Kenn method and the use of epoché, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation.

The individual interviews, journal entries, and focus groups confirmed empirical research and revealed new evidence for school districts and their leadership to consider. Data analysis revealed seven themes 1)SCL is beneficial, 2) agile leadership, 3) relationships are key, 4) change is challenging, 5) teacher growing pains, 6) time, and 7) importance of buy-in. The data revealed that SCL is beneficial at the classroom and building levels for schools implementing this pedagogy. Additionally, the data indicated that leadership styles and practices matter if stakeholders are to buy into the change to SCL. Further, this study provides insight into how time is needed for implementation and professional development, which may reduce educational leaders' challenges during pedagogical change.

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Appendix A

Letter to Institutional Review Board

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 10, 2023
Claudia Burregi
Susan Lovett

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-659 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF K-12 LEADERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CHANGING FROM TEACHER-CENTERED PRACTICES TO STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Dear Claudia Burregi, Susan Lovett,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us

at irb@liberty.edu.
Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Letter to Chief of Schools

Date

Chief of Schools

Dear,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological Understanding of K-12 Leaders' Lived Experiences of Changing from Teacher-Centered Practices to Student-Centered Practices and the purpose of my research is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders to equip students with 21st-century skills.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in School district and contact educational leaders to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to:

1. Participate in an in-person or a TEAMS, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. The dates and times will depend on the participant's location and will be set up to best suit your schedule.
2. Review your interview transcript to check for accuracy. I will return your transcript within one week of your interview and request you look over it within two days and return it with any corrections via email.
3. Participate in a reflective response writing via five journal prompt entries. These five entries will be given to you immediately after the interview and you will be able to email them to me. I will then respectfully request that you return your entries within two weeks from that date. Each entry should be answered in less than four sentences.
4. Participate in one focus group. You will self-select one of two times to attend one of the 60-minute focus group sessions. The number of focus group sessions will depend on the number of participants I have; hence, days and times will all be set to best suit your schedules once all journal prompt entries have been received. If all participants are not available during either of these two dates, the minimum acceptable number of participants will be three or I will offer a virtual time and date via TEAMS.
5. Contact me to schedule an interview

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.]

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Claudia Burregi, MPH
Liberty University School of Education Doctoral Candidate

Permission Response:
[Date]

Claudia Burregi, MPH
Liberty University School of Education Doctoral Candidate

Dear Claudia Burregi:

After a careful review of your research proposal entitled A Phenomenological understanding of K-12 leaders' lived experiences of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices, [I/we] have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study with educational leaders of Jefferson Parish school district.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ I/We will provide our membership list to Claudia Burregi, and Claudia Burregi may use the list to contact our members to invite them to participate in [his/her] research study.

☐ I/We]grant permission for Claudia Burregi to contact educational leaders to invite them to participate in her research study.

[Retain the below option if desired.]
☐ I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

[Official's Name]
[Official's Title]
[Official's Company/Organization]

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

Dear Educational Leader:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders at Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. The research questions of this study will thoroughly explore the lived experiences of K-12 educational leaders who have changed to student-centered practices and encouraged the adoption and implementation of student-centered learning practices within their schools, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be an educational leader (principal, vice principal, dean, master teacher, teacher leader fellow) who has completed training in their respective leadership role offered through the district or other recognized agency and are in the process of adopting and encouraging the implementation of SCL within your schools. Participants, if willing, will be asked to:

1. Participate in an in-person or a TEAMS, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. The dates and times will depend on the participant's location and will be set up to best suit your schedule.
2. Review your interview transcript to check for accuracy. I will return your transcript within one week of your interview and request you look over it within two days and return it with any corrections via email.
3. Participate in a reflective response writing via five journal prompt entries. These five entries will be given to you immediately after the interview and you will be able to email them to me. I will then respectfully request that you return your entries within two weeks from that date. Each entry should be answered in less than four sentences.
4. Participate in one focus group. You will self-select one of two times to attend one of the 60-minute focus group sessions. The number of focus group sessions will depend on the number of participants I have; hence, days and times will all be set to best suit your schedules once all journal prompt entries have been received. If all participants are not available during either of these two dates, the minimum acceptable number of participants will be three or I will offer a virtual time and date via TEAMS.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me or email me. Please provide me with the best way to reach you.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Claudia Burregi
Liberty University School of Education Doctoral Candidate

Appendix D

Follow-Up Email

Dear Educational Leader:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders to equip students with 21st-century skills. An email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to respond if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [Date].

Participants, if willing, will be asked to:

1. Participate in an in-person or a TEAMS, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. The dates and times will depend on the participant's location and will be set up to best suit your schedule.
2. Review your interview transcript to check for accuracy. I will return your transcript within one week of your interview and request you look over it within two days and return it with any corrections via email.
3. Participate in a reflective response writing via five journal prompt entries. These five entries will be given to you immediately after the interview and you will be able to email them to me. I will then respectfully request that you return your entries within two weeks from that date. Each entry should be answered in less than four sentences.
4. Participate in one focus group. You will self-select one of two times to attend one of the 60-minute focus group sessions. The number of focus group sessions will depend on the number of participants I have; hence, days and times will all be set to best suit your schedules once all journal prompt entries have been received. If all participants are not available during either of these two dates, the minimum acceptable number of participants will be three or I will offer a virtual time and date via TEAMS.

To participate, please contact me or email me.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Claudia Burregi, MPH
Liberty University School of Education Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E

Participant Informed Consent

Title of the Project: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF K-12 LEADERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CHANGING FROM TEACHER-CENTERED PRACTICES TO STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Principal Investigator: Claudia Burregi, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an educational leader who has completed training in your respective leadership role offered through the district or other recognized agency and are in the process of adopting and encouraging the implementation of SCL within your schools. An educational leader consists of principals, vice principals, deans, master teachers, and teacher leader fellows who have completed formalized leadership training within the past two years. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to understand the process of changing from teacher-centered practices to student-centered practices for K-12 educational leaders at Blue Ocean school district (pseudonym) in Louisiana to equip students with 21st-century skills. With the inclusion of leadership roles in K-12 schools, there is a need to understand how educational leaders change their perceptions of teaching and learning environments and how they encourage implementing student-centered learning (SCL), which equips students with 21st-century skills.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

6. Participate in an in-person or a TEAMS, audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 1 hour. The dates and times will depend on the participant's location and will be set up to best suit your schedule.
7. Review your interview transcript to check for accuracy. I will return your transcript within one week of your interview and request you look over it within two days and return it with any corrections via email.
8. Participate in a reflective response writing via five journal prompt entries. These five entries will be given to you immediately after the interview and you will be able to email

them to me. I will then respectfully request that you return your entries within two weeks from that date. Each entry should be answered in less than four sentences.

9. Participate in one focus group. You will self-select one of two times to attend one of the 60-minute focus group sessions. The number of focus group sessions will depend on the number of participants I have; hence, days and times will all be set to best suit your schedules once all journal prompt entries have been received. If all participants are not available during either of these two dates, the minimum acceptable number of participants will be three or I will offer a virtual time and date via TEAMS.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. However, this study will benefit educational leaders who are encouraging the transition from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning within their schools.
Benefits to society include allowing the voice of the educational leader to fill gaps in the literature for those who have changed to student-centered learning.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant interviews, journal entries, and focus group responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and all hard copies will be in a locked file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and deleted from said computer

after three years. Only the researcher and members of my doctoral committee will have access to the recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Jefferson Parish School District. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Claudia Burregi. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Susan Lovett.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix F

Journal Prompt Instructions

Date

Dear _____School District Educational Leader,

Thank you for your continual involvement in my research study. I wanted to provide detailed instructions on completing these five journal prompt entries. I ask that you reflect on our interview process and the answers you provided as well as the process of changing to student-centered practices as an educator who holds the title of an educational leader in _____ School District. I respectfully request that you answer the following questions in no more than four sentences and ask that you email back your entries within two weeks. This is to be mindful and respectful of your time, as I know it is valuable. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Claudia Burregi

Journal Prompt Questions

1. Reflecting on your experience and perceptions of the change to SCL, describe in detail what the adoption and implementation of SCL looked (looks) like for you within your context. (CRQ)
2. Reflecting on how you as an educational leader perceived the effect of changing to SCL at the classroom and building level, describe what you wish you had known then and what you believe could have caused a smoother change for yourself as an educational leader within classrooms. (SQ1)
3. Reflecting on the practices you are using or did use during the change and implementation of SCL, as an educational leader, how do (did) you perceive your role as an encourager for others throughout this process (during this process)? If you could redo

this process, describe how you could be more effective in encouraging the adoption and implementation of SCL across your school. (SQ2)

4. Reflecting on challenges you faced in adopting and implementing an SCL mindset, please describe which leadership measures you perceive would be (have been) effective during this process. (SQ3)
5. Reflecting on your experience, as an educational leader, throughout the implementation of SCL, what type of leadership practice would have been the most effective to encourage a school-wide change to SCL as a means of equipping students with 21st-century skills? (SQ3)

Appendix G

Interview Questions

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself and your educational career through your current position as an educational leader. (Demographical)
2. Describe the process you went through in becoming an educational leader. (CRQ)
3. How do you exercise leadership within your school (both seen and unseen)? (CRQ)
4. What is your perception of student-centered learning (SCL)? (CRQ)
5. What is your experience with SCL? (CRQ)
6. Please describe how you, as an educational leader, perceive what SCL looks like by telling the phase your school is currently in with the process of changing toward SCL. (CRQ)
7. Please describe your perception of the effect during the change process to SCL within the classroom. (SQ1)
8. Considering every core subject classroom, how did (how will) the change to SCL impact the school? (SQ1)
9. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your perceptions of the change to SCL at the classroom and building level? (SQ1)
10. How does your leadership affect those within the school? (SQ2)
11. How do you collaborate or directly work with teachers in a typical school day, and what degree of importance do you place on collaboration with your teachers? (SQ2)
12. What professional development experiences have you had that prepared you to understand what SCL is and how it would look across subjects in the school? (SQ2)

13. Describe how you encouraged teachers to change to SCL and how they could better implement SCL during this change process? (SQ2)
14. Describe your challenges when working with teachers in implementing SCL. (SQ2)
15. When has it been necessary to modify your leadership style based on implementing SCL in your school? (SQ3)
16. Describe ways you were able to mitigate personal resistance during the course of changing from TCL to SCL? (SQ3)
17. Where do you think your leadership practice can improve during times of change? (SQ3)
18. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experience in adopting and implementing SCL? (SQ3)

Appendix H

Journal Prompt Questions

Individual Journal Prompts

1. Reflecting on your experience and perceptions of the change to SCL, describe in detail what the adoption and implementation of SCL looked (looks) like for you within your context. (CRQ)
2. Reflecting on how you as an educational leader perceived the effect of changing to SCL at the classroom and building level, describe what you wish you had known then and what you believe could have caused a smoother change for yourself as an educational leader within classrooms. (SQ1)
3. Reflecting on the practices you are using or did use during the change and implementation of SCL, as an educational leader, how do (did) you perceive your role as an encourager for others throughout this process (during this process)? If you could redo this process, describe how you could be more effective in encouraging the adoption and implementation of SCL across your school. (SQ2)
4. Reflecting on challenges you faced in adopting and implementing an SCL mindset, please describe which leadership measures you perceive would be (have been) effective during this process. (SQ3)
5. Reflecting on your experience, as an educational leader, throughout the implementation of SCL, what type of leadership practice would have been the most effective to encourage a school-wide change to SCL as a means of equipping students with 21st-century skills? (SQ3)

Appendix I

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself, telling us your title as an educational leader, how you perceived the process of changing to student-centered learning, how you implemented and encouraged its implementation, and how that has impacted you as an educational leader. (CRQ)
2. How do you define student-centered learning, and where did you derive this meaning? (SQ1)
3. What role did you play in the change process of implementing SCL at the classroom and building level? (SQ1)
4. What should be done to encourage teachers to change to SCL and implement it in their day-to-day teaching? (SQ2)
5. What needs to be done differently to promote educational leaders' self-efficacy during pedagogy changes such as from TCL to SCL? (SQ3)
6. What lessons did you learn as an educational leader in changing your pedagogical thinking from TCL to SCL, and how did you encourage it within your context? (CRQ, SQ3)
7. Is there anything else you would not mind sharing that could be instrumental in understanding your experience changing to SCL and how you enforced implementing SCL?