

Lived Experience of University Continuing Education Leaders

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on a study that explored the professional lives of eight leaders of continuing education in Canadian universities, with a focus on their administrative role, to provide a deeper understanding of how they live within their practice (lived experience). A practical listing of 56 horizons of experience was identified, useful as an evolving checklist for university continuing education units and as a self-reflection tool for current and future continuing education administrators and leaders. The study provides insight for those considering leadership positions and for those interested in understanding the complexities of the role of leader. On a philosophical level, six essences of lived experience were revealed: responsibility, balance, connectedness, impact, voice, and passion. The experience of leadership through individuals who experience the phenomena provides critical understanding of the realities of practice.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article est basé sur une étude qui a exploré la vie professionnelle de huit dirigeants de l'éducation permanente dans des universités canadiennes, tout particulièrement leur rôle administratif, afin de mieux comprendre comment ils vivent leur pratique (expérience vécue). Une liste pratique comportant 56 horizons d'expérience a été établie, qui peut servir de liste de contrôle à caractère évolutif pour les départements universitaires d'éducation permanente et comme outil d'autoréflexion pour les administrateurs et dirigeants actuels et futurs de l'éducation permanente. L'étude offre un aperçu à ceux qui contemplant des postes de direction et à ceux qui s'intéressent à comprendre les complexités du rôle de dirigeant. Sur le plan philosophique, six éléments essentiels de l'expérience vécue ont été exposés : la responsabilité, l'équilibre, la connectivité, l'impact, la voix, et la passion. L'expérience de leadership rendue par des personnes qui ont vécu le phénomène fournit une compréhension indispensable des réalités de la pratique.

INTRODUCTION

Continuing education leadership is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon. Percival (1993) suggested that while the literature provides theory and descriptions of continuing education practice, "the description of continuing education practice provided by continuing educators is much richer and more multifarious than anything described in the literature" (p. 142). In addition to the pressure to become increasingly profit driven, continuing educators deal with many issues and challenges. From a behavioural standpoint, those who lead continuing education units must have excellent interpersonal skills, management skills, communication skills, planning skills, and time management skills. In addition to this mix of skills, continuing educators are often challenged to be creative and entrepreneurial. The work they do is complex and often learned on the job, as noted by Percival (1993):

From the moment that we begin our careers, then, we are apprenticing as adult educators. We learn in a variety of ways: on-the-job, from experienced colleagues, through reading and self-study, through participation in professional associations, and eventually, for some, through academic study. (pp. 1-2)

Baden (2001) argued that, as leaders, continuing education administrators are responsible for a variety of issues including budgets and human resources. While they are "committed to the highest ideals of learning and to the noble social goal of extending education to as many people as possible" (p. 37), they are also involved in institutional politics, specifically in the area of resources and support. Leaders of continuing education units face ethical and professional dilemmas as they try to plan and implement learning opportunities that make a profit for the university while trying to serve those who may not be economically privileged.

The research on continuing education leadership and administration focuses on characteristics and skills: it is functional and practical in nature. Exploring how university continuing education leaders live within their practice provides a deeper understanding of their world as they conduct their professional lives in an atmosphere of vulnerability, challenge, anxiety, frustration, and achievement. The experiences revealed by research participants provided the unique opportunity to look intently and intensely at the practice of university continuing education leadership, and the essences provided an in-depth understanding of the shared meaning (or story) for this particular group of people.

This study moves beyond the factual descriptions of practice, adding to the depth of understanding related to leadership in university continuing education.

RELATED LITERATURE

The Practice and Profession of Continuing Education

Leaders of university continuing education come to their profession through various routes and with a variety of educational backgrounds and experience. They arrive from faculty positions, administrative positions, or other areas where they may or may not have formal qualifications or have been immersed in the theory or perspectives of adult learning. The practice and profession of continuing education is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon that requires leaders to challenge their practice.

Percival (1993) indicated that for many involved in continuing education, their career begins as apprentices in adult education, recognizing that continuing educators learn about

continuing education on the job. Cookson and English (1997) developed a scale to assess performance indicators of continuing education administrators, and during the process “discovered that the roles of continuing education administrators were more complex than had been realized” (p. 23), supporting Percival’s (1993) assertion.

Galbraith, Sisco, and Guglielmino (1997) suggested that successful continuing education administration is dependent on knowledgeable individuals who are able to identify what makes continuing education administration unique or different from other types of administration. Continuing education administrators need to be efficient, effective, knowledgeable, and politically savvy. Galbraith et al. pointed out that many individuals who graduate from university with degrees specific to adult and continuing education take on administrative roles in that area; however, these administrators have to immerse themselves in the literature of administration with the hope of finding meaning and connections to their specific administrative roles. This pushes continuing educators to be creative and entrepreneurial because of the complexity of their work (Percival, 1993). Isolation in certain endeavours, lack of resources and support, and the pressure to become ever more profit driven are some of the issues faced by those involved in university continuing education. Time management, interpersonal management, communication, and planning are skills required by continuing education administrators. Percival indicated that “one of your greatest assets as a continuing educator will be your ability to reflect on and learn from your experiences in practice. Learning is vital to your development as an adult educator” (p. 144).

Studies on continuing education administration focus on roles and characteristics and include areas of competency such as program administration, program planning, instructional design, evaluation, assessment, instruction learning environment, facilitation, critical thinking, interpersonal communication, research and writing, and professionalism (Galbraith et al., 1997; Pearce, Hein, & Donaldson, 1998; Sullivan & Thompson, 2005). Roles and characteristics identified by Galbraith et al. (1997) and Eble (1992) included resourcefulness, adaptability, courage, commitment, imagination, integrity, compassion, and loyalty. Knowles (1980) suggested administrators should value experience, take risks, learn from failure, and be committed to people. Personality traits, satisfaction, and morale of continuing education administrators were also identified in the literature (Donaldson, 2007; Moroney, 2007; Pearce et al., 1998; Sullivan & Thompson, 2005; Percival, 1993).

Nesbit (2008) expressed concern about how continuing education administrators are managing rather than leading continuing education units. Responsiveness to internal and external issues and changes is vital for administrators in order to sustain effectiveness. Galbraith et al. (1997) pointed out that growth and development begins with the individual leader being a role model and providing leadership. Fleming and Caffarella (2000) noted that leadership is the most critical function of administration.

Leadership

There is an understanding in the field that administration and leadership of university continuing education requires a conceptualization or reconceptualization of current leadership perspectives to more closely align with leadership specific to university continuing education.

Fleming and Caffarella (2000) were concerned that leadership styles used in continuing education do not reflect the realities or specifics of adult and continuing education in relation to its marginal status. For this reason, they deemed adult and continuing education leadership to be in need of reconceptualization.

Baden (2001) suggested that as organizational leaders, continuing education administrators are responsible for a variety of issues including budgets and human resources. While they are “committed to the highest ideals of learning and to the noble social goal of extending

education to as many people as possible" (p. 37), they are also involved in institutional politics, specifically in the area of resources and support. Continuing education administrators often find themselves taking on leadership roles in distance education endeavours at their institutions. Beaudoin (2002) suggested that "many distance education initiatives are spawned within continuing education units where there is often a spirit for entrepreneurial and innovative practices" (p. 137). Marcus (2004) discovered that distance education leadership is not comparable to traditional educational leadership. Distance education leadership requires characteristics similar to continuing education administration, in the form of transformational leadership (innovation, change, and vision), and it is important for these leaders to attain and retain credibility and recognition within their institutions. Respectful relationships and communities of practice are therefore necessary in continuing education administration.

Leadership is emotional work and leaders face numerous challenges, both positive and negative, sometimes losing themselves in the process. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) wrote of the importance of leading with an open heart. Leaders develop thick skins in the process of leadership and as a result may "lose our capacity for innocence, curiosity, and compassion" (p. 3). These authors urged leaders to maintain an open heart in order to sustain themselves through turbulent times, in order to maintain their identity.

Leadership and administration is a topic that arises with colleagues in continuing education units across the country. The uniqueness of university continuing education poses the challenge indicated by Fleming and Caffarella (2000) that "adult and continuing education needs to be concerned with leadership as understood from the perspective of adult and continuing education" (p. 1). Understanding the lived experience of leaders of university continuing education will help to reconceptualize the practice of leadership for those who occupy positions understood as peripheral to the institution. Many continuing education units are administrative units and the leader, such as a dean, director, or manager of the unit, is charged with leading while assuming other roles. These roles may involve program planning, budgets and finances, human resources, and being entrepreneurial. Reflective practice is a concept that is acknowledged as important by continuing education practitioners; however, it is often difficult to find the time to engage in this important exercise. The literature in this area indicates that engaging in reflective practice is central to getting at the nuances of continuing education administrative practice and could establish important insights about perceptions on leadership and management. Lived experience provides an opportunity to shape a leadership model for university continuing education leaders.

THE STUDY: PARTICIPANTS AND METHODS

Phenomenology is a human science rooted in philosophy with a focus on exploring lived experience through the people who experience the phenomena. As a naturalistic approach, "phenomenology does not explain, but rather it creates understanding" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 100). The focus of phenomenological inquiry is the individual's experience. Using phenomenology as the research methodology provided the opportunity for leaders in university continuing education to describe their lived experience, providing awareness of the depth and layers of practice to reveal both a framework and the essence of administration and leadership.

A purposeful sampling approach was utilized, and through intensity sampling, eight leaders of university continuing education were selected. The participants were in leadership positions within their continuing education units. The units were of various sizes and included a variety of programming, including credit, non-credit, personal development, professional

development, ESL, and children's programs, thus requiring participants to be multi-taskers. All participants reported to their vice-president academic. The majority of participants have been involved in the field of continuing education for more than 15 years. Participants have varied educational and professional backgrounds, including academia and business, bringing a variety of skills and knowledge to their positions. Most of what they have learned about continuing education has been and continues to be learned on the job. They are dedicated professionals and are committed to university continuing education, acknowledging it as a satisfying career. They care deeply about staff, students, and the field. The majority of participants are of the baby boomer generation and female.

An in-depth audio-recorded interview was conducted with each participant. To obtain thick, rich descriptions from participants to illuminate the essence of their lived experience as continuing education administrative leaders, the following question was posed: "What is your experience of being an administrator of university continuing education?" Additional questions and probes were developed to elicit further response or clarification. A follow-up conversation was held one week following the interview. Participants engaged in reflective journaling for a five-day period during which they noted experiences in relation to themes that included the practice and profession of continuing education, leadership, power and politics, ethics, identity, and lifelong learning. These themes were derived from a literature review and provided a theoretical starting point from which discussion about continuing education administrative leadership could begin.

Limitations

The research study consisted of eight research participants. As the field of Canadian university continuing education is small, individual descriptions of experience have not been included in this study, to ensure confidentiality. The research findings are not representative of Canadian university continuing education units; however, the study provides an informed understanding of the reality of university continuing education administration and leadership, revealing the underlying meaning and taken-for-grantedness of their professional lives. The study contributes to a more authentic understanding of university continuing education leadership.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data were analyzed and synthesized using Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method. This method was chosen as it provided an opportunity for me, as a novice researcher, to use a structured phenomenological approach. The structured approach of this method also provided an opportunity to use it in a combined setting of administration, leadership, and higher education. The method consisted of three major components: phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. These components incorporated an eight-step process.

The first component, phenomenological reduction, identified 56 invariant constituents, also known as horizons of the experience, referring to the common concepts identified from the participants' interview transcripts and journals. The horizons of experience were clustered into six themes:

- continuing education administrators as functional leaders
- continuing education administrators as human resource leaders
- the rhythm of continuing education administration
- historical influences on the current practice of university continuing education
- the voice of continuing education administration
- the spirit of continuing education administration

Data analysis for the second component, imaginative variation, included individual textural descriptions, individual structural descriptions, and individual textural-structural descriptions. The process of individual data analysis was followed by the composite textural and structural analysis. The third component involved data synthesis and construction of a composite description of the lived experience of university continuing education administrators.

A composite textural-structural description of the lived experience is the final step in the modified van Kaam method. The intention of this step is to provide the essence of the lived experience. This final step, according to Moustakas (1994), is “the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (p. 100). By following the process outlined in the modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994), the study revealed the following essences of the lived experience of participants:

- responsibility
- balance
- connectedness
- impact
- voice
- passion

DISCUSSION

Through phenomenological analysis, a deeper level of being and consciousness in the form of essences was revealed. It is at this depth of understanding where the construction of meaning occurred. The construction of meaning is the essence of the administrative experience and pushes understanding beyond the function and form of the position as currently revealed in the literature. This final step, according to Moustakas (1994), is “the intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (p. 100). The purpose of this research study was to move Percival’s (1993) assertion beyond these practical applications to a moment of discovery where the essence of the experience—in other words, meaning—for one group of university continuing education leaders was revealed. This provides a deeper understanding of how they construct their practice. As Patton (2002) clarified, the focus of using phenomenology is to explore “how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 104).

Essence 1: Responsibility

As leaders of university continuing education, participants have a responsibility for and a responsibility to.

Within the *essence of responsibility* we are made aware of an underlying structure and meaning of responsibility: *responsibility to* and *responsibility for*. Participants feel a social responsibility as well as a professional/personal responsibility to and for. It is part of the structure of university continuing education leadership, without which continuing education administration would not exist for this group of people.

Responsibility For

As functional leaders, study participants are *responsible for* the ongoing business of continuing education: the day-to-day mechanics of the unit and the various commitments to the university. In addition to administration, leaders are responsible for marketing, faculty recruitment, and student affairs, as well as engaging in entrepreneurial ventures.

Responsibility for incorporates a concrete focus toward issues and tasks, both in the essence and in the literature. In addition, *responsibility for*, as identified in this study, also carries an understanding that administrative leaders undertake and ensure best practice, shifting the understanding of *responsibility for* from a concrete focus to a deeper level of structural meaning.

Responsibility To

Continuing education leaders have a *responsibility to* learners and the larger community, providing advocacy and accessibility and responding to needs.

Participants feel a *responsibility to* the university as they represent and promote it in the larger community; to all stakeholders to provide quality programs; to their unit as they try to move continuing education forward and position it within the institution; and, as indicated by some participants, to themselves. Following is the reflection of one participant:

We have a duty to serve the community, and the community includes those people who are working and have families and want to take courses. The university community needs to know that there are other students out there besides the 18–22-year-olds and that we have a duty to serve them.

Responsibility to is supported in the literature, embedded in an understanding of practice. The implication of *responsibility to* as embedded in the essence of responsibility provides a deeper meaning in relation to ethical practice and the personal and professional philosophy of practice. *Responsibility to*, as an essence of the lived experience of university continuing education administrators, can be understood as the basis for practice.

Responsibility emerged as an essence of university continuing education administration; however, responsibility is understood as foundational to the practice upon which everything related to continuing education administrative leadership is based. This was continually reinforced throughout the reading of participant transcripts.

Essence 2: Balance

Participants identify balance in relation to meeting the needs of learners, partners, and the university; they also identify issues in relation to time, understanding structures, and working within constraints. Personal and professional lives require balance.

Within the *essence of balance* we are made aware of an underlying structure and meaning, which is centring the position of continuing education (the unit and the leader) within the institution and maintaining equilibrium in their personal and professional lives. Through the *essence of balance*, we are made aware of the push and pull or tension that resonates throughout university continuing education leadership.

Leading a continuing education unit is a varied and diverse task, and participants identify the need to balance as they manage the various components of leading the unit. Meeting the needs of learners, partners, and the university is a balancing act as participants work through the tension of providing educational programming while generating revenue for the university. Following is the reflection of one participant:

I think people in our positions are really in a balancing act to try to make sure that our units understand the environment in which they're operating but that they also feel that the work they are doing is great and valued and all those good things.

In addition to administrative and leadership responsibilities, continuing education leaders are charged with being entrepreneurial while at the same time ensuring educational needs are

being addressed. The analogy of the iceberg is a reflection of what is (not) known or (not) understood about the practice of continuing education leadership. Continuing education is not well understood and involves much more than is known or acknowledged within the various levels within the institution. This affects how continuing education is positioned within the institution.

Continuing education leaders work in an environment of power and politics and are constantly negotiating their position as they try to serve both students and the institution. This often puts them in positions of tension where they face professional dilemmas as they try to plan and implement learning opportunities that make a profit for the university while trying to serve those who may not be economically privileged.

Time was revealed as an issue by all participants, whether not having enough time for planning, strategizing, or reflecting, or spending significant time on human resource issues. The issue of time in relation to the essence of balance is the variety and complexity of time spent or time required to address daily practice, leaving little or no time for reflection. Following is the reflection of one participant:

I would like more time to reflect and more time to talk to colleagues from other institutions and to exchange ideas and to talk at a more strategic level so I could think more clearly about where I want this place to be instead of running as fast as we can to keep things going the way they are now.

Participants revealed that other university administrative units have structures and constraints that do not necessarily fit continuing education and that faculty work within their own reward system. This provides them a viewpoint for identifying the constraints for continuing education.

Balancing personal and professional lives was revealed as a constraint, as was maintaining a healthy workplace and work life for themselves and those in their units. Finding a balance between personal and professional lives is a challenge. Concerns regarding stress-related health issues and commitments to work and family are on the rise. One participant shared the following:

It exacts a toll on your personal life if you're engaged to the extent that I choose to be engaged.

Leaders must work through their practice, considering their many commitments, to come to an understanding of balance within which they can live both personally and professionally.

Essence 3: Connectedness

It is important to build and maintain relationships within the continuing education unit, within the university, and outside the university.

Within the *essence of connectedness*, we are made aware of an underlying structure and meaning. Connectedness reveals a deeper level of relationship in the building, valuing, strengthening, support, and synergy of relationships that is revealed as connectedness. Through the essence of connectedness, we are made aware of the action of synergy that is vital to support university continuing education administrative leadership.

Participants endeavour to stay connected by building and maintaining relationships within their units, within the university, and outside the university. Staying connected to learners is vital. Following is the reflection of one participant:

It's all about relationships within the unit, university and with the communities you work with. . . . You have to be out there working with folks to make things happen and make sure they are in the best interests of those we serve.

Participants value the positive connections and relationships they have with staff, administrative units, faculty, and senior administration, but continue to seek other ways to strengthen these connections through awareness and understanding.

Both seasoned and emerging leaders can benefit from professional development and professional connections. Participants in this study revealed a strong support network through professional organizations such as the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education (CAUCE) as well as regional continuing education organizations. They identified the importance of increased awareness and strengthened support from colleagues and peers institutionally.

Respectful relationships and communities of practice are necessary in continuing education leadership.

Essence 4: Impact

Participants feel a sense of mission, accomplishment, and being of service to learners, the community, and the university.

Within the *essence of impact* we are made aware of its underlying structure and meaning: the power and capacity to contribute to and affect lives. Through the essence of impact, we are reminded of the ethical implications of university continuing education leadership.

Participants feel a sense of mission, accomplishment, and the potential of being of service. They feel rewarded by what they do, and they feel they can and do make a difference in the lives of learners. Following is the reflection of one participant:

For me one of the motivating factors is that what we do makes a difference in so many lives. You know it really does contribute to individuals achieving their goals and dreams and in a sense you know that I, and the folks I work with, have some ability to contribute to that.

There are many opportunities and possibilities to reach the broader community through continuing education. Participants feel they have an impact on the institution and see continuing education as value-added for the institution. Following is the suggestion of one participant:

We're seeing that [continuing education] can have a value-added to the broader institution, not just to the community kinds of things but really adding value to the bread and butter of what the institution is all about, from student recruitment and adult learner perspective.

Continuing education has not been acknowledged as a core activity within the institution, and the profession of continuing education has not been viewed as professional in the same way faculty would be viewed as professional. Continuing education units perceive threats in the areas of resources, decentralization, positioning of the unit, and academic credibility.

Research participants spoke from the heart about the (potential) impact continuing education has on individual lives. In addition, they feel they have an ethical obligation to make an impact on those they work with, on both a personal and professional level.

Essence 5: Voice

Participants value the opportunity to be included, heard, and understood.

Within the *essence of voice* we are made aware of its underlying structure and meaning: that is, the impact of power, politics, and identity on the voice of university continuing education units and their leaders.

Participants value the opportunity to be included, to be heard, and to be understood. Participating on key university committees provides continuing education leaders with a presence and an opportunity for an increased presence, connection, identity, and voice.

While relationships are generally positive, research participants feel there is a lack of understanding and awareness about continuing education, which poses a challenge for those involved in the practice of continuing education in finding their place, their identity, and their voice.

Each continuing education unit looks and feels different, and whether it has its own faculty, is centralized, or is reorganized every few years depends on the institution to which it belongs. This is evident in the study, as some participants revealed the challenge of restructuring.

There is a sense of vulnerability among most continuing education leaders about the future of their units. There is also a feeling of isolation and loneliness. The following was revealed by one participant:

There is that kind of loneliness or isolation that means that a lot of things that come up for you are unique and don't really get well understood by other people in the university; so often in my career I have found that my best advice and commiseration has come from colleagues at other institutions rather than people within my own institution.

For some continuing education units, organizational history has influenced their position within the institution. A historically based undertone of pessimism still exists toward some continuing education units.

Continuing education units struggle to find their place but participants are committed to finding a place, an identity, and a voice for their unit within the university.

Essence 6: Passion

Participants spoke with passion about continuing education, about the staff, the opportunities, and the rewarding experience of being involved in university continuing education.

Within the *essence of passion*, we are made aware of its underlying structure and meaning: the experience of emotion and intensity about a career and all that it entails.

While some participants revealed passion for working in university continuing education, all participants spoke with passion about continuing education: about staff, opportunities, and the rewarding experience of being involved in university continuing education. In describing a situation where continuing education was able to help a student, one participant stated, "I get goose bumps just describing it . . . to be involved in a circumstance where you can make a difference. I can't think of anything better."

Participants spoke of risk taking, creativity, and challenge as significant facets of their practice. Overall, participants spoke of university continuing education leadership as a rewarding career.

Passion was conveyed by participants through tone and energy, making it obvious that participants had a genuine passion for the work they undertake, the people with whom they

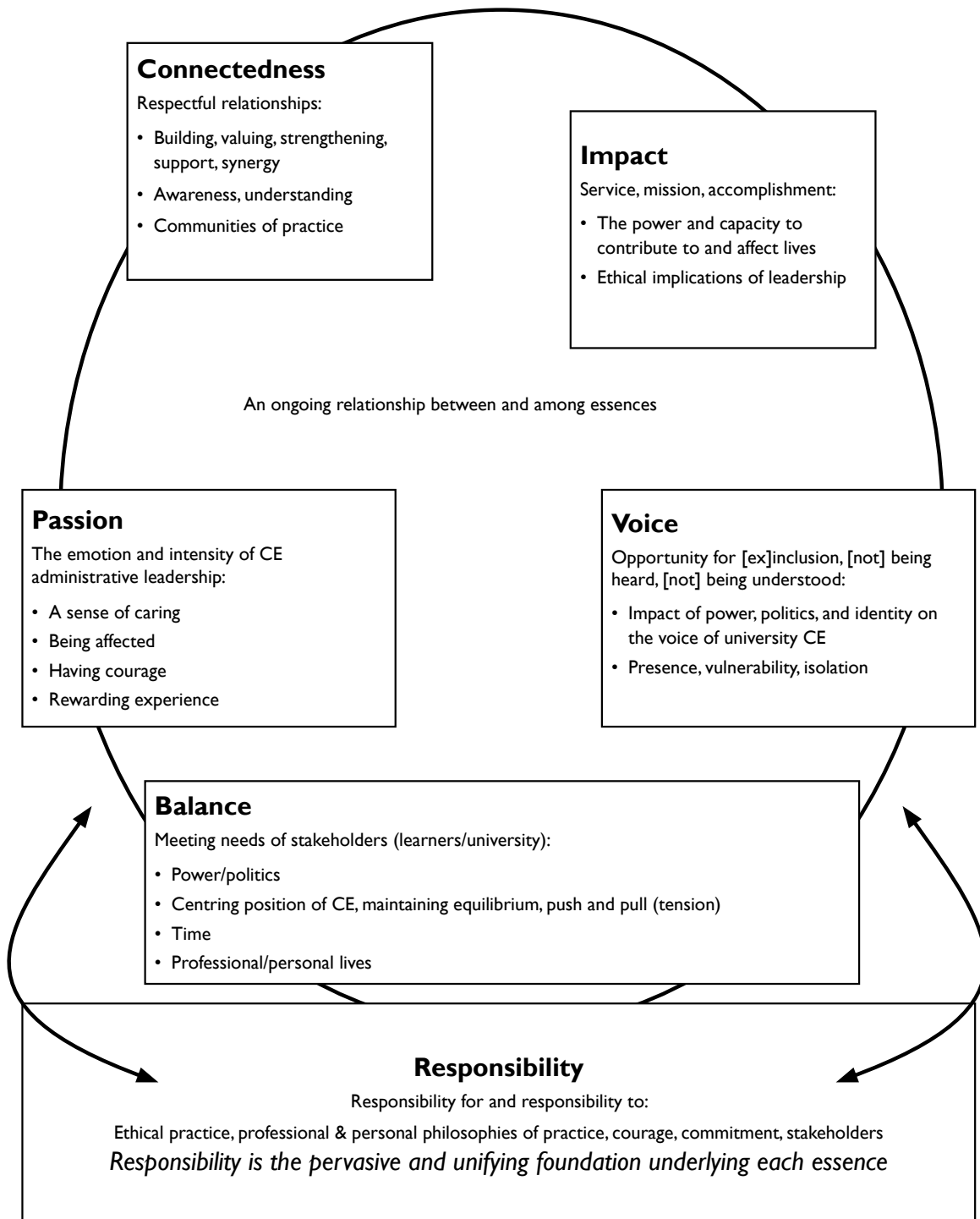


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of the Essence of Lived Experience of University Continuing Education Administrative Leaders

work, and the people (learners) they work for and on behalf of. The following was revealed by a participant reflecting passion and courage:

You have to really struggle to build a healthy workplace, a high-performance culture within the workplace, with a healthy workplace/work life balance. If you can do those things it makes it so much easier to deal with the other challenges—the challenges of budgets, the challenges of marketplace competition, and so on. It's really about the people and you've got to focus on that. It means having courage sometimes.

Responsibility, balance, connectedness, impact, voice, and passion are the soul of leadership for this group of participants. It is the essence of experience as the underlying structures and meaning that frame continuing education leadership for this group of people. There is an ongoing relationship between and among essences (see Figure 1).

IMPLICATIONS

On a practical level, the study provides a realistic, matter-of-fact view of university continuing education leadership. Analysis of the data identified 56 horizons of the lived experience of continuing education leaders. These horizons of experience speak directly to individual participants as their experience as leaders was illuminated. Many of the horizons of experience are familiar as they are identified in the literature as roles, responsibilities, characteristics, values, and challenges. This portion of the data analysis provides a significant design and resource in the form of a practical listing that explains the what, when, where, who, and how of university continuing education leadership: in other words, the realistic implementation of continuing education leadership.

On a philosophical level, six essences of lived experience were revealed. The horizons of experience fell naturally into six themes leading to the final composite textural-structural description, from which six essences emerged. The essences represent the underlying structure of the overall experience, incorporating horizons of experience as revealed in the data analysis, to provide the meaning of continuing education leadership for this group of people. A consciousness of the experience provides a frame within which current and future leaders can discover, appreciate, identify with, value, and reflect on the foundation and significant underpinnings of administration and leadership. Being conscious of the underlying essence of structure of practice provides opportunity to look at the taken-for-grantedness of leadership practice.

This study provides insight into practice. The experiences revealed are the realities of this group of people. The practical listing of 56 horizons of experience, indicated below in the Self-Reflection Tool for Administrative Leaders, can be used as an evolving checklist and reflective tool for current administrators and leaders in continuing education. It is also a useful resource for those who are new to or are considering leadership positions. The listing is a first-hand account of authentic experience that provides insight into leadership for a particular field of practice, but can be considered for leadership in other fields.

Self-Reflection Tool for Administrative Leaders

Theme 1: *Administrative Leaders as Functional Leaders*

- The ongoing business of continuing education
- Not enough time for planning/strategizing/reflecting
- Processes with other administrative units
- Funding/financial responsibilities/pressures
- Structures/systems/policies
- Participates in university committees/meetings
- Feels the need to be aware of everything
- Represents continuing education/university
- Quality assurance/best practices
- Succession planning
- Compensating for service

Theme 2: *Administrative Leaders as Human Resource Leaders*

- Valuing/supporting staff
- Staff processes
- Building relationships/trust
- Mentoring/empowering staff
- Disrespectful relationships/trust issues
- Time spent on human resources matters
- Staff uncontrollables/anxiety
- Stability
- Staff unwilling to change or try new things

Theme 3: *Rhythm of Administration*

- Collaboration
- Balancing
- Accessibility/responsive to needs of learners
- Tension
- Variety/diversity
- Unique—business/education
- Creativity/innovation/development
- Risk
- Promoting the institution
- Scanning the environment
- Competition

Theme 4: *Historical Influence on Current Practice*

- Attitudes and culture toward unit
- Restructuring of the unit
- Ineffective committees
- Fractured relationships

Theme 5: *Voice of Administrators*

- Intra-university relationships
- Positioning continuing education
- Valuing continuing education
- Vulnerability
- Community relationships
- Building relationships
- Undervaluing continuing education
- Strategic planning
- Isolated/lonely/challenge to find place
- Advocate for adult learners
- Continuing education as value-added
- Professional development connections
- Lack of understanding/awareness of continuing education
- Faculty attitudes

Theme 6: *Spirit of Administration*

- Continuing education as a career
- Healthy work/life balance
- Sense of mission
- Self doubts
- Personal/professional growth
- Be in touch with your own values
- Feels the need to be more aggressive

The findings of this study provide an opportunity for current continuing education leaders to reflect on their practice, providing them opportunity to reflect, refresh, and renew and to view the taken-for-grantedness of their practice through their own experiences and their own voice. The study provides a forum for continuing education leaders to consider the findings in relation to what is espoused at a personal, unit, and institutional level: in other words, the link (or lack thereof) between rhetoric and practice.

The authentic experience of research participants supports Percival's (1993) assertion that while the literature provides theory and descriptions of continuing education practice, "the description of continuing education practice provided by continuing educators is much richer and more multifarious than anything described in the literature" (p. 142). In addition, the data support Fleming and Caffarella's (2000) claim that "adult and continuing education needs to be concerned with leadership as understood from the perspective of adult and continuing education" (p. 1). This has implications for professional development in that leaders of continuing education need to have a foundational understanding of adult education as well as of business processes.

This study provides a view of leadership from the experiences of a particular group of people. The experiences revealed in this study can provide a broader understanding of leadership. Leadership has multiple components and levels of experience and understanding that must be acknowledged. The experiences lived by leaders must be incorporated into professional development strategies.

This study reveals a depth of leadership that surfaces the actions of practice. Based on this surfacing of actions, leaders must be encouraged to maintain an awareness of the horizons of experiences that are embedded in practice and the underlying possibilities in relation to their leadership.

This study serves as a resource to help raise the awareness and understanding of continuing education leadership—what it is, what it means, and how it is interconnected to the university as a whole. In other words, it gives voice to university continuing education. Through their own voices, this study serves as a medium through which leaders and administrators can reflect on their own practice.

This study extends the literature on university continuing education, leadership, and administration in relation to valuing individual experience and the implications for leadership in administrative positions in a university context as well as a wider administrative leadership context.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The essences revealed are essential components of leadership for the participants involved in this research study. The essences revealed a deeper meaning of leadership and provided the opportunity for meaning and knowledge to be co-created by research participants and the researcher. They bring new understanding and awareness to leadership and may well have a place in curriculum for leadership studies. This study brought forward authentic experience and emotional connection enriching an understanding of leadership in university continuing education.

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