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FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program: The Impact on Quality of Work Life and Perceived Relationship Changes between Administrators and Teachers

Abstract

Federal and state initiatives designed to improve schools have created unintended, negative consequences. Educational research studies link these initiatives to declines in teacher job satisfaction, decreased teacher retention, and the potential development of adversarial relationships between teachers and administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program's effect at an identified, Title I school in Georgia that implemented the program as a means of school reform and improvement. Data were obtained through observations, document analysis, and interviews. A constructivist epistemology was used to synthesize collected data to create meaning. Findings indicated faculty and administrators established strong interpersonal relationships with each other and created a school family. Participants expressed they shared a common language and students and faculty were empowered to develop leadership roles.

Keywords

quality of work life, student leadership, Leader in Me, caring environment, teacher empowerment

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Introduction

At great cost and effort, school reform programs have been legislated and implemented over the past 30 years. During the same time, teacher satisfaction rates declined, and teacher attrition rates increased. Given the sheer cost associated with implementation of said reforms, as well as the need to constantly train new faculty to implement these initiatives, this pattern is problematic. Currently, the United States Federal Government spends close to \$700 billion dollars annually to fund education efforts, and that does not include funds supplied by state or local government agencies (Guthrie & Ettema, 2012).

As society moves into the 21st century, American students are facing complex social issues. These include school safety, bullying, poverty, racism, homelessness, food instability, lack of technology, immigration concerns, and a lack of basic needs (Payne, 2018; Ravitch, 2011). Many students lack appropriate role models in the home to teach them basic skills on how to get along with others, work collaboratively, be respectful of others and their differences, time management, and basic communication skills (Covey et al., 2014). These skills are vital for the success of our society (Covey, 2011; Hatch & Collinwood, 2010). Covey (2011) states the Leader in Me Program is based on the development of the whole learner and focuses on developing the mind, body, heart, and spirit of the individual. The FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program was designed as a total transformation process and focuses on developing the entire student including the student's academic skills as well as their social and emotional growth (Covey, 2011).

Adoption and implementation of the Leader in Me Program can be linked to two strands identified by the National Youth at Risk (NYAR). The first NYAR strand relates to the head or intellectual achievement and talent. The Leader in Me Program focuses on encouraging each student to meet his or her learning potential by establishing and monitoring both academic and personal goals (Covey et al., 2014). This is linked to Covey's second habit, which is "Begin with the End in Mind, Have a Plan" (Covey, 2008). Utilizing the second habit helps students become more involved in their learning and offers them the opportunity to monitor their learning (Covey et al., 2014). The second habit provides a sense of accountability and the students can see the progress attained. If the established strategies are not effective, the student identifies other strategies, which will assist their success (Covey et al., 2014). This teaches the student there are alternative options, which can be explored to help them achieve their goals (Covey, 2008).

The second NYAR strand identifies with the heart and focuses on the development of social and emotional skills. This strand aligns with the Leader in Me Program outcomes, which encourages students to build relationships with others, show compassion for others, and helps students manage their actions and emotions by being proactive instead of reactive (Covey, 2008). Additional benefits of having strong social and emotional skills include the development of constructive relationships with adults and peers, increased coping skills as well as decreased emotional stress (Hatch & Collinwood, 2010). Covey et al. (2014) believe schools must be more proactive in developing social and emotional skills for students, as this is vital for student success both during their school career and once they become members of the workforce. These skills are developed through modeling appropriate communication skills and allowing students to work through issues with peers (Covey et al., 2014). Fonzi and Ritchie (2011) believed this

starts with the implementation and adoption of Habit One- Be Proactive. Developing Covey's first habit, teaches students they are responsible for themselves regarding their actions, moods, and attitudes (Covey, 1989). It is also linked to Covey's fifth habit, which focuses on social and emotional development, which is "Seek First to Understand, Listen before you talk" (Covey, 1989). This habit teaches students to evaluate the situation and try to look at it from another person's viewpoint. While the individuals, do not have to agree, it allows the person to understand that other opinions matter and need to be respected (Covey, 2008). The development of these skills will assist future generations as they face challenges including employment issues, difficult social situations, rejections, and as they encounter difficult personalities (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to examine how the quality of work life of elementary school teachers and the relationships between the teachers and their administrators were affected when the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program was implemented at an identified, Georgia Title I elementary school as a vehicle for school reform and improvement. The Leader in Me Program utilizes a whole-school transformation model and was developed with educators to prepare students to be contributing members of the 21st Century (Covey, 2008).

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

RQ1: What were the life and career experiences of elementary school teachers prior to and during the time the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program was implemented at an identified, Georgia Title I elementary school as a vehicle for school reform and improvement?

RQ2: How was the quality of work life of elementary school teachers affected when the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program was implemented at an identified, Georgia Title I elementary school as a vehicle for school reform and improvement?

RQ3: How were the relationships between elementary school teachers and their administrators affected when the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program was implemented at an identified, Georgia Title I elementary school as a vehicle for school reform and improvement?

Findings of this study could impact participating schools and others considering implementing the program. Universities, regional agencies, and school district leadership development programs, both nationally and internationally, may use these findings to implement school reform and improvement more effectively.

Literature Review

This study used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Stephen Covey's Theory of Principle Centered Leadership, which utilizes transformational leadership to understand how teacher and administration relationships positively or negatively affect the quality of work life in an elementary school environment. The study also identified how the quality of work life of elementary school teachers is impacted when the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program is implemented.

Description of Leader in Me Program

Since the beginning of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program, the Program has been implemented as a method of school reform in over 4,000 schools in over 50 countries worldwide. These schools embraced a new paradigm for developing life-ready leaders (FranklinCovey, 2021). The FranklinCovey Institute (2016) reported Leader in Me schools experience a total transformation during the three-year implementation. The decision to implement the Leader in Me Program is a joint decision made by school faculty and administrators. It is not a principal initiated venture, but one embraced by all members of the school community (Covey, 2008).

Once a school has decided to implement the Leader in Me Program, the administration, faculty and staff attend a three-day training provided by the staff members of FranklinCovey (Covey, 2008).

The initial training focuses on teaching the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (7 Habits) to faculty and provides the platform for faculty and staff to teach the 7 Habits of Happy Kids (Covey, 2008; Covey et al., 2014). During the initial training, the faculty participates in numerous team-building activities to encourage participants to work cooperatively and build trust and respect for each other (Covey, 2008). Through the training, participants are expected to adopt the 7 Habits and model them in their daily lives at home and at school. Subsequently participants share a common language and culture which can be used at all grade levels and with support teachers such as art, music, P.E., Special Education teachers, and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (Covey et al., 2014). Leader in Me is not a one size fits all program or someone coming in to redesign the school, rather the transformation of the school comes from the participants and the students (Covey et al., 2014). Upon completion of the initial training, participants integrate the Leader in Me Program in their classrooms through their lesson plans. There is no set pace to the implementation of the Program. Some teachers leap right in and integrate the 7 Habits into all content areas and others begin one subject at a time (Covey et al., 2014).

The 7 Habits are introduced to students in a variety of ways. Some schools have a kick-off program, which involves students, and others invite parents to introduce them to the principles of the program (Covey et al., 2014). Through adoption of the Leader in Me Program, teachers receive access to resources available from FranklinCovey. FranklinCovey wants to ensure schools are successful in the implementation of the program. Schools receive additional training through an assigned coach. Additionally, faculty and staff are encouraged to visit or connect with other Leader in Me Schools to observe how they utilize the Program (Covey et al., 2014).

Each school is evaluated using a rubric that measures the progress of the school in the areas of leadership, culture, and academic results (FranklinCovey Institute, 2017). Upon implementing the Leader in Me Program for an average period, the school may decide to apply for Lighthouse School status (Covey et al., 2014). A Lighthouse School indicates the school has fully implemented the program, and all stakeholders are working together to accomplish goals established. Observations completed by FranklinCovey employees; artifacts collected by the faculty, staff, and students; and interviews with all stakeholders are used to determine Lighthouse School status (FranklinCovey Institute, 2016). Full implementation of the program offers improved relationships among all participants, including administration and faculty (FranklinCovey Institute, 2016).

The 7 Habits.

The 7 Habits are composed into three main categories, which are independence, interdependence, and the development of self. The first three habits focus on developing personal independence. The first habit, “Be Proactive, You’re in Charge” encourages the student to recognize they are responsible for their attitude, mood, and conduct. As students learn and adopt the habits, they realize they must accept responsibility for their actions (Covey, 2008).

The second habit, “Begin with the End in Mind, Have a Plan” teaches students how to establish a plan, establish goals, and monitor progress. This allows students to see the progress they achieve by keeping a written record of their data (Covey, 2008). The third habit, “Put First Things First, Work First, Then Play” shows students how to establish priorities, organize

themselves, and complete what is most important first. For example, students learn they should complete homework before they go outside to play (Covey, 2008). Covey (2008) believed the first three habits were personal and considered a “Private Victory” since the individual achieves these skills by themselves (p.43).

The fourth through sixth habits develop the skill of interdependence and encourages students to work collaboratively and respect the opinions and feelings of others. The fourth habit, “Think Win-Win, Everyone Can Win” encourages students to collaborate to solve any disagreements or conflicts, and to listen to others (Covey, 2008). The fifth habit, “Seek First to Understand, Listen Before you Talk” teaches students to look at situations from another person’s viewpoints. Students are encouraged to listen to others without interrupting. This allows students to develop respect for peers and those who have different viewpoints (Covey et al., 2014). The sixth habit, “Synergize or Together is Better” encourages students to work together, get along with others, and seek out people’s ideas to solve problems. Students seek solutions to problems by collectively working together (Covey et al., 2014). These three habits are considered “Public Victories” as they are shared victories with others (Covey et al., 2014, p.44).

The seventh habit, “Sharpen the Saw, Balance Feels Best” focuses on the student taking care of themselves. Students recognize the importance of taking care of their bodies, eating properly, exercising, and getting adequate rest (Covey, 2008). Students are encouraged to take time to develop emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually (Covey et al., 2014). Through implementation of these 7 Habits, hope is the student has developed life-long skills which will help prepare them to be contributing citizens in the 21st Century.

Professional Development

When a school adopts and begins the implementation program of the Leader in Me Program, faculty and staff members participate in professional development opportunities, including an intense three- day training session. After the initial training is held, the faculty and staff focus on implementing the 7 Habits in their daily lives and modeling them for the students. The faculty also works together to create a positive school culture and develop leadership opportunities for faculty and staff (FranklinCovey, 2021). Throughout this implementation process, the faculty and staff continue to receive training through professional development activities, academic coaching, virtual training sessions, and other workshops provided by the FranklinCovey staff, Leader in Me personnel, and participants from other schools. The participants from other schools are important in assisting newer schools during the implementation process. They provide newer schools opportunities to discuss challenges and celebrate victories (Covey, 2008a).

Each subsequent year, the faculty and staff continue to receive training from FranklinCovey Leader in Me support personnel (FranklinCovey, 2021). These training sessions reinforce the 7 Habits and provide opportunities to share them with others (FranklinCovey, 2021). During the second phase of implementation, the faculty and staff develop academic and personal goals they wish to attain. Each classroom determines the goals they wish to attain for the year and the progress is monitored on a weekly basis (FranklinCovey, 2021). Additionally, the school establishes goals they wish to attain over a five-year span (FranklinCovey, 2021). These goals must be measurable, and the leadership committee and faculty monitor the progress (FranklinCovey, 2021). As the year progresses the results are prominently displayed to show the progress being made.

During the continued implementation process, training opportunities are available for faculty and staff and separate trainings are available for administrators. Administrator training

opportunities provide administrators the opportunity to address positive outcomes and to provide a way to deal with any obstacles encountered (FranklinCovey, 2021). Administrators indicated these training sessions provided a safe environment to address questions or concerns. It also provides administrators the opportunity to develop and share leadership opportunities with their faculty and staff (FranklinCovey, 2021).

Neuman and Cunningham (2009) stress the importance of professional development in the implementation of any new program as critical to the success of the program. Effective professional development should be designed to increase the knowledge of participants to meet the needs of their students (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). Ash and Persall (2000) believed that for students to be successful, teachers must continue to learn, collaborate, assume leadership roles, and celebrate accomplishments.

Professional development activities and workshops are one-way teachers become better prepared to teach in their classrooms equip students to be ready to become contributing members of the 21st century (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Their research identified seven characteristics, which must be incorporated for the professional development activities to be successful. The most successful professional development opportunities should include the following items, "...1. Is content focused, 2. Incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory, 3. Supports collaboration..., 4. Uses models and modeling of effective practice, 5. Provides coaching and expert support, 6. Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection, 7. Is of sustained duration" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 4).

The FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program implements these strategies in planning professional development opportunities for faculty and staff implementing the program in their schools. The schools who adopt the program attend basic professional development opportunities however; the vast majority of the professional development activities are determined by the leadership team and faculty due to shared leadership (Covey, 2008). The first training sessions focus on introducing the 7 Habits and allows participants to become familiar with the concepts and how they can utilize them in their lives and in their classrooms. Each workshop encourages participants to work collaboratively to reach solutions and to resolve any differences they might have (Covey, 2008). Participants are provided time to explore the 7 Habits and develop ways to share them with their students. If these methods are not effective, the leadership team and staff from FranklinCovey are available to provide resources so the participant can explore other ways to ensure success (Covey, 2008). Since the implementation of the program involves a minimum of a three-year commitment, the training is ongoing and can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual school (Covey, 2008). Since the schools that implement the program utilize a shared leadership approach, the faculty and leadership team determine professional development opportunities.

Professional Development Common Language.

One of the initial goals of the faculty during the first year of implementation is to teach students the language used by the Leader in Me Program (FranklinCovey Institute, 2017). This provides both students and the faculty and staff with a common language (Covey et al., 2014). Teachers introduce the language in the appropriate context as they introduce the 7 Habits. Students then participate in activities, which allow opportunities to practice the newly acquired language (Covey et al., 2014). As students develop the 7 Habits, they are often asked to share their experiences with younger students. Sharing their experiences with other students, helps develop and reinforce the common language (Covey et al., 2014).

Professional Development Students.

While students are not formally engaged in true professional development activities led by FranklinCovey, students receive training from their teachers (Covey et al., 2014). As implementation begins the first year, students receive training in each of the 7 Habits. Some of these lessons consists of integrated units and others are stand-alone lessons. As each habit is introduced, students practice and model the habit objectives at school and at home. Older students serve as mentors for younger students and offer praise to students participating in appropriate actions and/or gently remind students if they are off task or not responding in an appropriate manner (Covey et al., 2014).

In the second and third years of implementation, students continue to receive training in the 7 Habits (Covey, 2008a). During this time the concepts of the 7 Habits are reinforced and students build a better understanding of the benefits of Leader in Me. One of the key components of the Leader in Me program is that students become responsible for setting academic and personal goals and monitoring them on a weekly basis (Covey, 2008a). Establishing these goals empowers students to become aware of their academic success. Covey (2008a) stated, "A goal not written down is only a wish." By tracking progress, students know how well they are doing in achieving their goals. This also lets students know the areas they need to work on the most or it provides them an opportunity to identify a different strategy. This is one method utilized to increase student achievement and helps students assume responsibility for their learning (FranklinCovey, 2017).

Students are also provided the opportunity to develop life-long skills involving communication skills, working collaboratively with others, acceptance of ideas other than yours, creative problem solving, and interpersonal skills. Students are able to assume other duties once commonly done by teachers. Some of these include preparing bulletin boards and cutting borders (Covey et al., 2014). These skills empower students in the classroom. An additional level of empowerment is student led conferences. During the conference, students are given the opportunity to share with their parents the progress they have made. The teacher is present at the conference but the student is responsible for sharing data including the progress made toward goals (Covey, 2008a). By providing students this opportunity, the students are able to develop confidence in their abilities and it lessens the stress a teacher led conference often causes (Countryman & Schroeder, 1996).

Methodology

A single case study methodology was used to examine how teacher and administrator relationships influence the quality of work life for elementary school teachers, specifically the impact of teacher relationships with the administration through the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program. Purposeful sampling procedures were used to identify teachers who had worked at the school since implementation of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program. Participants who received the full training from the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program were selected to participate in the study. Data were collected through individual interviews, document reviews, observations, and memo-journaling. A system of open coding helped identify related themes. Triangulation was used as a method of establishing credibility of findings.

For this study, the selected school had received CCRPI star climate scores of fours and fives in the time period of 2014 to 2016 (Elementaryschool.org, 2016; GADOE, 2016). A higher number of stars indicates the students attend school in an environment they feel is supportive, nurturing, and safe (GADOE, 2016).

The selected Georgia school provided services for 512 students in kindergarten through fifth grade (GADOE, 2016). Approximately 75% of the students were eligible for the free or

reduced breakfast and lunch program (Elementaryschool.org, 2016). The majority of parents worked in local factories or in the field of agriculture. It was one of the last schools in the area to experience changes in socioeconomic levels and ethnicity (H. Bennett, personal communication, February 12, 2017). Eighty-seven percent of the school population is composed almost equally of Caucasian and Hispanic children, and 13% of the other ethnicities include African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial (School System, 2016).

In order to be considered in this research, each participant had to meet all items of the following criteria:

- a) employed at the school since the implementation of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program;
- b) attended all training sessions provided by the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program implementation team since the start of the program;
- c) been teaching for a minimum of 10 years;
- d) earned a bachelor's or higher degree.

School records were used to identify a list of eligible participants. From the list of eligible participants, five teachers were randomly selected and invited to take part in the study. These teachers were able to provide rich data because they had been employed throughout the implementation process of the program.

Two private, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the five teacher participants at the school over a seven-week period. The interviews were scheduled during participants' planning times or after school. Interview lengths varied from 30 to 90 minutes. Participants were given a prepared list of questions. Responses were audio recorded and written notes documented during the interviews. Participants were asked clarifying questions throughout as needed.

Additional data collected included corroborating statements during informal interviews and observations with the principal and assistant principal; documents showing improvements made in mandated state assessments; documents chronicling the report made by FranklinCovey; and, the school's achievement of Lighthouse status. Other documents included notebooks and posters displaying the history of the implementation process of the Leader in Me Program and chronicling the progress in becoming a Leader in Me School.

Participant profiles provided a general overview and context for the study. The participants are teachers with various levels of professional experience, having taught between 12 and 22 years at the same school for a minimum of 10 years. Participants included four females and one male teacher, which is a representative sample. Their teaching responsibilities included the areas of general education, math intervention, art, and music.

Three sets of interview guides were created for the study. The first set was designed to collect basic background information about the participants and was sent electronically. Participants provided information related to their years in education, highest degrees obtained, prior work experiences, years teaching at this school, and factors contributing to their decisions to enter education. The second round of face-to-face interviews focused on how the school decided to implement the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program, the participants' initial reactions to the knowledge they were going to implement the program, the initial training process, and the climate of the school prior to Lino implementation. Responses from the participants led to additional questions being added to clarify their answers. The third set of questions focused on the perceived changes in relationships based on the implementation of the program, benefits of the program for all stakeholders, and recommendations for improving the

process for other schools implementing the program. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed into an electronic file in a timely manner. Memos were written following each interview and after every visit, interview, and interaction with documents and transcripts. Writing memos assisted in making sense of what was occurring in the study. Maxwell (2013) stressed the importance of writing memos in the process of data analysis.

Data Analysis

A constructivist epistemology was used for data analysis in this research. Raw data included interviews, transcripts, observations, memos, and document reviews. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended a constructivist epistemology enables the researcher to construct meaning from the environment in which it is collected. Data analysis began immediately after each interview. Audio recordings were transcribed by Rev.com. After the files were transcribed, audio recordings were compared to transcripts and analyzed for any discrepancies. All participants were provided a hardcopy of their transcripts to verify content and enhance the accuracy of data. Memoing was done in the margins of the transcripts as they were reviewed, and initial thoughts and feelings were recorded in the researcher's journal

The first stage of coding was conducted using open coding. Prior to the collection of data, a general list of codes was generated using materials from the content of the research questions and the literature review. Open coding allowed the researcher to fracture the data into smaller pieces called codes or units. Each participants' transcript was color coded and identified by numbered lines for easy identification of the participant and the number of the interview (Saldaña, 2013). Transcripts were used to identify key words or phrases. As key words were identified, the transcripts were categorized into smaller units. In Vivo coding was used to identify words and phrases used by the participants while sharing their stories. When new areas were identified, new categories were created.

In the second stage of data analysis, codes were grouped that had similar characteristics or shared common elements to reduce data to smaller categories. In Vivo coding was used to identify participant words and phrases referenced in the initial codes. Multiple readings of transcripts and notes were made throughout the process. A co-researcher was engaged to read each transcript and confer on the content to ensure clarity of understanding. Discussions with the co-researcher resulted in flexible data categories. Some content was applicable to several categories, resulting in sub-categories.

As data analysis continued, themes began to emerge. A concept map was used to identify connections to categories. This process was an effective means of identifying the key components of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program and their impact on the schools that implement the program. As the coding process continued, Research Question 1 concepts were coded in blue, concepts related to Research Question 2 in green, and Research Question 3 in orange. This helped identify elements related to each research question and with managing the data. An example of a theme and the supporting commentary is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Emerging Themes and Supporting Commentary

Themes	Categories	Supporting Commentary
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Coming Home	Culture- school as extended family	“We always had a family atmosphere, but we became a family when we went through the training.”
	Share a common purpose	“We are stronger as a faculty. We work together better than before because we are connected and have common purpose.”
	Do what is best for kids	“Everybody has the same goal, which is to be here for the kids and to do what we can to teach our kids how to be leaders in the community and in their families.”

Summary of Findings

The first theme involved viewing the school community as family, which focused on the relationships among administrators, teachers, and other school stakeholders. Due to the potential implications of the intersectionality of quality of life, Life Long Learning on the part of both teacher and student, and the nature and structure of relationships, it is important that the conceptual framework and research questions align. For this reason, the research questions are aligned with a summary of the findings in the themes and the conceptual framework.

Research Question 1: What are the life and career experiences of elementary school teachers when an identified, Georgia Title I school selects the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program as a vehicle for reform and school improvement implements the Program? All participants involved in the study had previous work experience outside of the school environment. Kate had work experience as a floral director and wished to pursue a position that would provide more time with her family. Thadd had worked in a grocery store and as the minister of music at a local church, but he has always had a connection to music since he was a young child. Susie’s work experience included working in retail and at a center for performing arts. Annie’s vast work experience included owning a dance studio, catering in her parents’ restaurant, being a cheerleading coach, and holding various positions at her local church. Lynn knew she wanted to teach since she was a young child and played school with her dolls. She taught pre-K prior to being hired at Riverview and she has spent her entire career in the field of education.

Kate, the art teacher, and Thadd, the music teacher, have only taught in their specialty areas, and they have the opportunity to interact with every student in the school. They have assumed an active leadership role in the implementation of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program, and since they interact with each student, they feel an active connection with every child. From the onset of the implementation process, Thadd has been on the Lighthouse team, and early in the implementation process, Kate took an active role. At the end of the first year, Kate asked the principal to put her on the Lighthouse team, a position she has held for seven years.

Annie, who has the most years of teaching, has been a member of the Lighthouse team since the beginning of implementation. Her teaching career began later in life, and she has experienced several job changes during her career. Her experiences include different general education grades as well as currently teaching math intervention. Her children and grandchildren's learning difficulties sparked her interest in becoming a teacher. The intervention coach position allows her to work with small groups of students who have difficulty in math in various grade levels. She receives a lot of satisfaction when she sees her students succeed. General education teachers Susie and Lynn have remained in the general education classroom. While they changed grade levels, they both prefer working with younger students as they see the rapid progress the students are able to achieve at this level.

Data analysis identified Life Long Learning (LLL) or continuous education as an outcome of implementing the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program. All participants in the study have been actively engaged in some form of staff development, either through FranklinCovey, the local school district, or school-wide initiatives. These training sessions or Life Long Learning opportunities provide participants skills needed to adapt to change (London, 2012). London (2012) defined LLL as a way to mentally develop the mind to be open to new ideas and ways of thinking. Susie explained:

We had to search ourselves pretty deeply. We shared with one another. It was like going through a family therapy session. We came out a lot stronger. I really do feel like we are unified. It was a really "wow" experience. We learned to look at things in a different light. We spent time learning about looking at things through each other's point of view.

Just because they may be doing something different doesn't mean that they are wrong. Lynn contributed, "Whenever we go to a training, which is like a conference, just to see what other Leader in Me Schools are like and bring ideas back, it's very exciting." Susie reiterated the importance of continuous education for teachers: "We meet with other Leader in Me faculties to share ideas. It is great see what others are doing. We receive additional training on ways to help kids. They are really helpful." Life Long Learning begins at birth and continues throughout the life of the individual (Jarvis, 2006). Life Long Learning opportunities were participated in when four of the five participants actively pursued and received advanced degrees to enhance their teaching abilities. These degrees were completed while employed full-time in teaching positions and managing family responsibilities, and provided teachers the opportunity to acquire new skills. Susie has not participated in formal academic opportunities. She attends training sessions at the school and county levels, and through FranklinCovey to continue growing through professional development opportunities. The faculty was willing to assume the additional responsibilities that went along with implementation of the Leader in Me and believe the initial training was critical to the success of the program.

The faculty at Riverview transitioned from utilizing teacher centered classrooms to implementing student led classrooms. Typical teacher duties include being responsible for arranging PTO programs, fall festivals, bulletin boards, and other school events. Teachers at Riverview work with students to help them take on some of these responsibilities. Releasing control has been difficult for some teachers. Annie explained, "We want our bulletin boards to be perfect. The borders gotta be beautiful; the work perfectly lined up. But kids can so do that. Kids can create everything. They might not be perfect, but the kids have great ideas and are creative." When walking the halls, I clearly saw how students had a hand in creating bulletin boards. Some were not symmetrical, but they were creative. One showcased geometry in which students created pictures with the shapes, and the border was decorated with shapes the students had

studied. Kate reported, “The kids love taking ownership.”

Teachers at Riverview have spread their wings and assumed different roles. Kate, Susie, and Lynn each said they had typically been followers. Through the implementation of the FranklinCovey Program, they have actively pursued leadership positions in the school. Avoiding the spotlight, Kate surprised herself when she asked to be on the Lighthouse team. Susie has never liked to be noticed but stepped up when she was named to the Lighthouse team and has been on the team since the implementation of the Leader in Me. Lynn has been in the background her entire life but decided she could make a difference when she realized the personal growth she has made. Riverview teachers have been provided the opportunity to develop leadership skills during the implementation process. FranklinCovey (2018) believes everyone is a leader, and the Leader in Me Program provides the skills and resources for everyone to be a successful leader.

Even though the Riverview faculty experienced a closeness prior to implementing the Leader in Me Program, they experienced a paradigm in the way they viewed each other. After the initial training, the teachers forged close interpersonal relationships, a bond, or a level of trust with each other. They have developed dynamics in the school that has a family structure where everyone supports each other. Annie shared, “It (the school) is like one big family. We work as a team to get the job done.” The faculty trusts each other to nurture and look after each other in professional and personal matters. Interpersonal relationships between faculty members have been forged and strengthened. Susie explained, “We are united. We are connected because we have a common purpose. We trust each other. We learned how to really, truly live in that interdependent area, meaning we know how to work together to get the best outcome.” The changes in faculty relationships closely follow Bolman and Deal’s (2017) human resource frame. Teachers cover for each other and interact freely without fear of being treated disrespectfully. The faculty does not work for individual gain; rather, they work to promote common successes. Kate shared, “As for the family aspect, we have something that unites us on a deeper level than just teaching kids. We are building our character and theirs together. We are pushing ourselves to be better so that they can follow a better example.” The *7 Habits* has taught them to work through any uncomfortable situation and to view it through the other person’s eyes. Turning problems into opportunities is a goal of the Leader in Me Program (FranklinCovey, 2018).

Another key finding related to life and career experiences was the successful preparation of students to be contributing members of the 21st century. Teachers empower students to assume leadership opportunities through applying for positions in the classroom and in the school. These opportunities have encouraged students to develop Life Long Learning skills as well. Students complete job applications and provide a rationale why they would be a good fit for jobs in the school and in their classrooms. The application process provides students real life experiences that will assist them when they are joining the workforce. Students are provided the resources to develop the skills necessary to achieve this through modeling from teachers and the use of materials through FranklinCovey (2018). By utilizing a student-centered approach to learning, students take an active role in their learning. Students establish goals and monitor their progress by completing a graph or chart. Should a strategy not work, the students are provided tools and resources to make the necessary adjustments to achieve their goals. Susie explained, “Students record their progress in their data notebooks every day. If they aren’t making the progress they want, we discuss reasons why their strategies aren’t working. It helps them identify new ways to accomplish their goal.” Students responsible for establishing goals achieve at higher levels and close academic gaps (Marzano et al., 2001). Lynn explained how much the students’ DRA scores

had improved. She shared the students read a passage and are then asked questions about the content. When the students answer, most relate their responses to one of the *7 Habits*. The students explained the character was not being proactive, or the character wasn't working together. The CCPRI scores of Riverview continually improve each year. This score indicates the college prep and readiness of students (GADOE, 2017).

Students develop leadership skills through conducting student-led conferences. Students plan with their classroom teachers to lead the conference. These are held two times a year. Ms. Jones explained, "Our students use their data notebooks to show their parents what they have accomplished. Students plan the conference and conduct a mock conference with the teacher prior to the actual conference." Annie added, "Our students were nervous at first, but now they have confidence. They can answer questions their parents have. It is a powerful tool." Students monitor their progress in their data notebooks by completing a graph or chart. Annie shared, "I have watched my grandchildren conduct these conferences with their parents. It is amazing to see their confidence grow and it is less stressful." Findings from Countryman and Schroeder (1996) report student-led conferences lead to increased parent-student communication and can lessen the stress parents feel when they have to go in for a conference. For some students, it provided a chance to assume a different role in which they were the expert (Countryman & Schroeder, 1996).

Research Question 2: How was the quality of work life of elementary school teachers affected when the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program was implemented at an identified, Georgia Title I elementary school as a vehicle for school reform and improvement? The questions focused on quality of work life sparked several lively conversations. Findings of this study indicate the work life of the teachers showed improvement with the implementation of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program. This was especially obvious with Thadd's response regarding the quality of work life. He used an operatic voice and sang "AHHHHHHAAHHHHA. Now can you get that in writing? It is amazing." Thadd loves working at the school and appreciates the support of his colleagues. Thadd explained, "I've worked other places, but nothing compares to this. We can count on each other." Four of the five participants eagerly responded in a positive manner. Kate, who has changed schools every four of five years, plans to retire here, as does Lynn. They love the "feeling of the school." However, Annie's response was unlike the others. When asked about perceived changes in the quality of work life she said, "I don't know. I've always been a workhorse. I've always been here from before school to way late. Let me think about it." When I revisited the question during the second interview, her response was, "You are asking that again. I don't know." The other four participants reported they noticed visible differences in the quality of work life in the school. Annie said, "People are comfortable to speak with each other in an open manner and know they will be respected whereas before, feelings would be hurt. We share the same language." Thadd believes the most important factor is, "the change in relationships with each other. We have an understanding and we have the flexibility to practice 'win-win.' We developed the ability to look through the eyes of other people. It is powerful." Green (2000) explained, "The quality of teacher work life is the most important factor influencing teacher performance" (p. 169). Susie added, "We are here to support each other. We build each other up and support them." Throughout the implementation process, the participants stressed the importance of working together to help each other be successful.

Every participant in the study believes he or she has created a level of trust within the faculty that promotes a sense of safety and security with each other. Prior to the implementation

of the program, teachers did not really trust each other, and feelings were often hurt. Kate shared, “The school got along but we were separated. There were cliques, and you were either in or you were not.” Lynn explained, “Before (Leader in Me), sometimes you’d have an argument between colleagues and tempers flaring. You don’t see that now.” Through the implementation of the Leader in Me Program, teachers began to trust each other and to treat each other with respect. Teachers understand they will be treated respectfully and do not fear being treated badly. Bolman and Deal (2017) believe trust is one of the most important factors in a work environment.

Another benefit related to the quality of work life is empowerment. Every participant discussed the importance of being empowered and being able to empower students. The faculty feels synergized, much like a well-oiled machine that works continuously. Since the faculty has developed a level of interdependence, they recognize and value the differences of each other. They are aware of the skills each other has, and they work to utilize them. Because teachers are empowered to complete their work assignments and because they are trusted to do their jobs, they are able to empower students to take responsibility for their learning. Through modeling, they are able to show students how to set, monitor, and achieve their goals. Students see first-hand the benefits of using the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program. Rappaport (1987) explained how empowerment occurs when people, organizations, and communities gain control over the issues relevant to them. Participants feel empowered to do their jobs, which are to prepare students for the future. Students realize teachers are there to support them to be successful by providing the necessary tools and resources.

Teachers experienced freedom in their ability to communicate with each other as a benefit of the Leader in Me Program. Participants expressed the prerogative to vocalize their joys or concerns with each other. The 8th Habit, which is finding a voice, was introduced last year and has given the faculty the gift of free speech. Participants were given the opportunity to address concerns without fear of reprisal. Thadd commented, “Before Leader in Me, we were hesitant to speak up. Now we know we will be listened to, and our concerns will be heard.” The teachers believe the open communication allows them to continually improve relationships with the students and each other.

Teachers have developed a deep love for the school and the community. Teacher attrition is low at Riverview, and educators typically leave due to retirement or the relocation of a spouse, according to the current principal, Ms. Jones, who reported over a five-year period the turnover rate at Riverview is less than 1%. This number is significantly less than the typical turnover rate for many schools. According to the GADOE (2017), approximately 44% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years. The request for transfers to other schools is virtually non-existent, and she has a waiting list of teachers who want to join the Riverview faculty. Participants in the study are loyal to Riverview and said they plan to complete their careers there. One participant mentioned she had never stayed at a school longer than five years, and she is currently in year 10 at the research school. All participants indicated they were happy in the current work environment and were not interested in changing schools, even though opportunities have been offered. Tableman (2004) explained there are certain factors contributing to school climate, including an environment that is physically appealing, encourages open communication, promotes a sense of belonging, focuses on the academic success of the students, provides a safe environment, and promotes positive interpersonal relationships. Chen (2010) reported higher job satisfaction led to increased teacher retention, reduced stress, and more positive relationships with their administrators.

Research Question 3: How were relationships between elementary school teachers and their administrators affected when the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program was implemented at an identified, Georgia Title I elementary school as a vehicle for school reform and improvement? All participants expressed the relationships with their administrators changed in a positive way after the implementation of the Leader in Me Program. Prior to implementing the program, their descriptions indicate the previous administrator was in control and expected teachers to do what they were asked. Their opinions and suggestions might have been considered, but the principal had the final say. Participants described their perceptions of the former administrator prior to the implementation of the program. Kate described him as being “very straight, professional. This is what you need to do, this is what you’re going to do, this is your job.” Thadd shared, “Before implementing the program, the administrator was more closed, not open, and we didn’t have a voice.” The type of relationship with the principal depended on who the teacher was. Annie contributed, “Before, Leader in Me, the principal was in charge and made the decisions, and you were told what you were expected to do, and pretty much you did it. He was about developing a plan and reaching the goal.” Teachers had professional relationships with the principal, yet they often did not feel their opinions were valued. Kate explained, “I felt like the administration itself was close, more with each other in a friendly, cliquish kind of way, and that you were either a part of that circle or you weren’t. Not everyone was treated as a leader.” Kate said her principal was “... very good at encouraging us. It was just a different style of leadership.” Immediately after the initial training, all participants noticed differences in relationships between participants and their former administrator.

Susie provided:

Our (former) principal, his paradigms changed drastically, He went from being a principal that told us what we needed to do to being a principal that believed in empowerment and empowered us to try different things, really showing us that he valued us. He really started working to show appreciation. Our morale changed a lot; our culture changed a lot.

Thadd contributed, “I think it (Leader in Me) deepened the relationship between the principal and ourselves. We understood this really was about the kids.” Kate added, “After the training, I felt hope of something better. I was empowered and able to join in and be a part of what I was passionate about to help our kids.”

Annie described a situation regarding changing classes: “He went from being closed to any input from teachers to ‘I never even thought of that as a solution.’ He was open to our suggestion and actually listened to us. It was a totally different reaction.” Teachers who worked for principals who invested time to get to know their faculties had higher staff morale and worked in more positive school climates (Stewart-Banks et al., 2015).

During the implementation process, the school experienced significant personnel changes. All five of the front office staff took new positions, retired, or were reassigned. This included the principal, assistant principal, secretary, school academic coach, and administrative assistant. While the faculty was in charge of the Leader in Me Program, there was a period of uncertainty during the transition. When the new administrator took over, no new initiatives were initially implemented. The new principal was familiar with the Leader in Me Program, and the first year of her tenure, she observed the operations of the school and watched them use the program. During this year, the faculty did not feel they made a lot of growth, but they continued to use the *7 Habits* with their students. At the end of the year, the new administrator went to the faculty and explained how they were going to use the *7 Habits* to help their students achieve. All

participants believe the current administrator empowers them to be successful with their students and each other. They feel she is approachable, and there is no topic that cannot be broached. Kate commented, “Everyone has a voice. Everyone has the ability to contribute. Everyone is more in the know. We have a lot more involvement and unity. We are ever evolving.”

Susie shared, “We learned how to work together, how to disagree with each other, how to be better listeners and better problem solvers and things like that.” McKinney et al. (2015) reinforced the concept that principals who foster positive relationships with their faculty and create a nurturing environment have higher morale.

The Leader in Me is not a principal-led program, and Ms. Jones is very open with her faculty and works to establish goals together. Kate shared, “Ms. Jones understands the need for meetings but doesn’t have us meet unnecessarily, and she tries to celebrate the staff and kids whenever possible.” After students completed Milestones testing, the principal arranged a field trip to a state park. For some students, it was their first trip to a park. They were able to hike, have a picnic, and complete other activities in a natural environment. When the CCPRI scores arrived, and they had risen so drastically, she hosted a ‘Block Party’ for the entire school. Special food was provided for the entire school. She recognizes the need to celebrate the successes of the school, faculty, and students. Kate added, “(We) know how much she loves and appreciates our hard work, and that really can change the environment that you work in.” Teachers who worked for principals who invested time to get to know their faculties had higher staff morale and worked in more positive school climates (Stewart-Banks et al., 2015). It is evident the *7 Habits* are fully ingrained in the lives of the participants, students, and the principal. Participants often mentioned the importance of being able to speak the same language to each other and to the principal (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1966) stressed the importance of peer relationships and a positive work environment.

The teachers at Riverview appreciate the opportunity they have had to implement the Leader in Me Program. All potential teacher candidates are aware of the commitment of implementing the Leader in Me Program. Teacher candidates are interviewed by a panel and if they are not interested in the implementation of the Program, they are not considered for employment. Thadd informed the researcher this was the case for interviewing administrators as well. While teachers expressed a deep appreciation and devotion to the Program, other schools are not as lucky. In conducting research on the topic of the *7 Habits*, one thing the researcher discovered regarding the FranklinCovey method of school reform and improvement are the costs associated with the Program. FranklinCovey (2016) reported a high rate of success in the area of school improvement, but the high costs associated with implementing the program are problematic for some school systems, according to David Debs, Client Partner for FranklinCovey Leader in Me Schools. Mr. Debs is responsible for marketing The Leader in Me Program and providing support for schools and organizations in Georgia. Mr. Debs reported the cost of implementation is based on the number of students enrolled in the school; however, the average cost is approximately \$80,000 (personal communication, March 1, 2017). This fee includes the training by FranklinCovey, classroom materials, coaching, professional development, and other support provided by FranklinCovey throughout the implementation process (FranklinCovey, 2016). Mr. Debs (personal communication, March 1, 2017) relayed some schools qualify for financial aid, including scholarships or sponsorships from supporting organizations, to fund the program. The Riverview faculty reported their fees currently run approximately \$8,000 per year and it is problematic to fund. Teachers engage in numerous fundraisers throughout the year to ensure they retain access to the coaching staff at

FranklinCovey. Due to the current financial situation of many school systems, this could be a deterrent for schools to adopt and implement the Program.

Limitations

Locating prior research with information about the implementation and history of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program is limited. In reviewing other articles, dissertations, and other documents related to the Leader in Me Program, the vast majority cite sources from Covey, Leader in Me, and the FranklinCovey Institute. One author, El-Attrache (2018) stated, “While Leader in Me has been implemented in schools for almost 20 years, there is little literature available on the perceptions of the program (p. 9). The author continued, “The literature published on Leader in Me is not an adequate amount. This is a significant problem, because educators are not able to fully understand this program or determine if it would be a good fit for their school or district (p. 7). Evans (2014) reported, “FranklinCovey’s research offered case studies of schools using the leadership curriculum, and data associated with changes at the schools. However, it would be important to note that the data were gathered by either the schools or FranklinCovey and were not from an outside, independent source (p. 19)”. While there are numerous studies, which tout the benefits of the Leader in Me Program, these studies referenced resources from the FranklinCovey Institute, Leader in Me, and authors Stephen Covey, Sean Covey, Muriel Summers, and David Hatch.

Final Conclusions

The Georgia Title I school identified as a needs-improvement school implemented the Leader in Me Program as a vehicle for reform and improvement. The study explored the experiences of five teachers who have been employed at the research site since the implementation of the Leader in Me Program and serve as members of the Lighthouse team. Data from the study identified four primary themes: (1) creating a school family, (2) teaching students responsibility, (3) Life Long Learners or continuous education, and (4) empowerment of students and faculty.

Through the creation of a school family, participants reported strong connections to their colleagues, the administrators, and the students. Participants expressed a deep love and concern for each other, as well as devotion to the school and the community. This was evident from comments by participants and interactions observed. The warm climate of the school provides a shelter for all. The findings of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2014) indicated positive school climates cannot be established unless all components, including collegiality, professionalism, trust, positive leadership, high student expectations, and positive interpersonal relationships, work together.

Preparing students to be leaders in the 21st century was uncovered during data analysis. Students receive extensive opportunities to assume leadership duties in and outside of school. Through modeling, the students take the skills they have learned and share them with their parents, siblings, and other family members. These students become active learners through setting goals and monitoring their progress. As the future leaders of tomorrow, these students have been provided a set of skills that will enable them to tackle obstacles and situations they encounter. Cornfield (1999) stressed the importance of preparing students to be productive citizens of the 21st century.

Developing an appreciation of acquiring knowledge provides participants and students the opportunity to engage in Life Long Learning opportunities. Teachers described the feeling of being energized and renewed after attending training sessions that enabled them to better meet the needs of the students. Modeling these skills for students teaches them the importance Life

Long Learning. The rewards of Life Long Learning provide the learner tools to be able to adjust to change in all aspects of their lives, including work, home, societal, cultural, and global perspectives (London, 2012).

Participants believe the implementation of the Leader in Me Program led to the empowerment of faculty. Planning and communication provide necessary tools for students to experience success academically and personally. Participants believe their empowerment enabled them to voice suggestions or concerns, and they knew they would be heard. Manion (2005) and McGregor (1960) reported organizations that allow employees to offer opinions build healthy relationships, and employees are more content in the work environment.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and transformational leadership was the framework for this research. Based on data analysis, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was an appropriate selection. However, Bolman and Deal's Organizational Theory (2017) might have been a better choice. Bolman and Deal's (2017) human resource or family frame recognizes the importance of the employee. Employees are valued and view their relationship as that of a family unit and work to ensure they know they are an important part of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Transformational leadership was used as part of the framework; however, it was not identified as a major element of the implementation process. This could be a result of the transformation of the faculty, administration, and the school when the Leader in Me Program was implemented. The principal was not in control of the program; the teachers were responsible for leading the program.

This study was an important addition to research as it identified perceived changes on relationships between faculty and administrators. It also investigated the quality of work life of elementary school teachers with the implementation of the FranklinCovey Leader in Me Program. This study provided insight about the importance of being able to discuss difficult issues in a professional setting and being able to come to a solution to problems that allows everyone to win. The study also indicates the benefits of working together to establish goals and to help students be successful.

This research highlighted the implementation of the program that appears to have made an impact on everyone directly involved in the process of implementing it. The participants of this study could not say enough about the numerous changes they experienced both professionally and personally. It was a life-changing event, and they wish they had known about the benefits sooner. For schools looking at reform and improvement methods, the FranklinCovey Leader in Me would warrant further consideration.

Final Note

In December 2017, the school achieved another milestone. It was notified by FranklinCovey that it had been awarded the coveted title of being identified as a FranklinCovey Lighthouse School. Once their application was received and the FranklinCovey Lighthouse team completed the review of documents and a site visit, the school was notified within the week of this accomplishment. The Lighthouse team shared it usually takes two to three weeks for a school to be notified of the results. The school's faculty was ecstatic to achieve this goal and to celebrate this accomplishment with their students and the community.

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