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**National Agenda: Development of Best Practices  
in Human Resources using *Ways of Knowing*  
*Through the Realms of Meaning* as the Framework**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* by Dr. William Allan Kritsonis as a framework that innovative and progressive leaders in education can use to implement and utilize the absolute best practices regarding Human Resources in an educational organization. Dr. Kritsonis's *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* provides useful guidelines for holistically addressing all facets of Human Resources in an educational setting. This paper will explore the six fundamental patterns of the meaning outlined in Dr. Kritsonis's *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning*: symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics and synoptics to provide guidelines to ensure that all aspects of Human Resources in an educational environment are addressed appropriately and implemented effectively and successfully.

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### Purpose of the Article

The purpose of this article is to develop the concepts presented in *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* by Dr. William Allan Kritsonis as a framework that innovative and progressive leaders in education can use to implement and utilize the absolute best practices regarding Human Resources in an educational organization. Dr. Kritsonis's *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* provides a blueprint for holistically addressing all facets of Human Resources in an educational setting. This paper will explore the six fundamental patterns of the meaning outlined in Dr. Kritsonis's *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning*: symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics and synoptics to provide guidelines to ensure that all aspects of Human Resources in an educational environment are addressed appropriately and implemented effectively and successfully.

### Guidelines for Governing Human Resources in an Educational Setting

Governing Human Resources in an educational setting properly is crucial for school districts to successfully address the academic achievement of students. Student performance on standardized tests is heavily influenced by practices in Human Resources in the educational organization. Procedures in Human Resources can directly impact the quality of instruction students receive. Supportive measures for ensuring highly qualified educators can be implemented directly into Human Resources Management procedures. (Heneman & Milanowski, 2004)

Management practices in Human Resources can be directly linked to appraisal tools developed to gauge competencies regarding employee performance. (Heneman &

Judge, 2003; Shippman, 1999) Strategies for defining teacher expectations can be embedded in processes utilized by Human Resources. (Heneman & Milanowski, 2004)

The significance of guidelines for governing Human Resources in an educational setting can be evidenced in the following processes: recruitment, hiring standards, teacher certification, teacher evaluation, teacher induction, on the job training, professional development, compensation and mentoring.

Recruitment calls for the Human Resources Department establishing a quality applicant pool. Desirable applicants possess the appropriate knowledge base, talents to fulfill the mission of the organization. The Human Resources Department ensures proper hiring standards and requires proper certification from applicants. Evaluation techniques are generated from the Human Resources Department. Teacher Induction and Professional Development procedures are stem from the Human Resources Department.

Guidelines for compensation are also established in the Human Resources Department. The Human Resources Department sets supplemental pay for critical need areas. Compensation for fulfilling department chair roles and extracurricular areas are decided by the Human Resources Department. Other measures to compensate employees implemented by the Human Resources Department are loan forgiveness programs, tuition assistance and housing assistance. Other factors affecting compensation can be performance based.

Kritsonis states: “World-wide, people are aware of the need for the most effective possible education system . . . “(Kritsonis 2007, pg. vii). Universally, leaders in education when operating effectively and efficiently, the Human Resources Department can serve as a crucial part of the process for increasing the effectiveness of the overall educational system.

### **Post-Modernistic Approach in Developing Educational Programs**

Today, a post-modernistic approach to developing educational programs is needed more than ever. Hence, *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* by Dr. William Allan Kritsonis addresses concepts that can heighten the effectiveness of the Human Resources Department in an educational organization.

In *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning*, Dr. Kritsonis outlines traits for developing a person holistically:

*A complete person should be skilled in the use speech, symbol, and gesture (symbolics), factually well informed (empirics), capable of creating and appreciating objects of esthetic significance (esthetics), endowed with a rich and disciplined life in relation to self and others (synnoetics), able to make wise decisions and to judge between right and wrong (ethics), and possessed of an integral outlook (synoptics) . . .(Kritsonis 2007, pg. 15).*

The six realms of meaning address an indepth and extensive range. When each aspect of the six realms of meaning is specifically targeted the outcome is the “development of whole ‘person’” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 15) The Human Resources Department can use these tenets to ensure that each applicant is looked at holistically.

This will ensure that the applicant is well rounded as well as knowledgeable. This is imperative because educators are charged with the task of developing students holistically. Educators must address more than subject matter of course content in order to reach the affective domain of students.

Curriculum development in *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* is targeted. “Curriculum must be selected that makes sense and has meaning for the student” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. x). Additionally, “(a) curriculum developing the above basic competencies is designed to satisfy the essential human need for meaning” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 15).

Ensuring commitment to proper curriculum development is addressed by Dr. Kritsonis. Human Resources would do well to maintain these principles when discussing curriculum with prospective employees.

## Symbolics

*The first realm, symbolics, comprises ordinary, mathematics, and various types of nondiscursive symbolic forms, such as gestures, rituals, rhythmic patterns, and the like (Kritsonis 2007, pg.11).*

Addressing symbolics targets ordinary language, mathematics, and nondiscursive symbolic forms. This realm explains and emphasizes effective communication strategies. The Human Resources Department can focus on this realm by targeting effective communication skills in applicants as well as members in the department. This realm is crucial to every aspect of Human Resources and education. This realm targets communication, which is crucial for all stakeholders in education if the organization’s mission comes into fruition.

The Human Resources Department can implement tools that assess the manner in which prospective employees will communicate in various roles. For prospective teachers, the interviewee may go through a mock lesson. This will allow the employer to clearly assess how the applicant will deliver information to students. This process will answer questions such as: “Is this applicant passionate regarding their subject matter?” and “Will this applicant be able to speak to the students in a manner that the students can relate to?”

While targeting this realm, the Human Resources Department must develop strategies to determine how an individual applying for an administrative position may relate to others. Exceptional communication skills are a necessary trait that educational leaders must possess. Administrators must know how to communicate in a manner that is conducive to a free flow of dialogue with all potential employees. (Cloud & Kritsonis 2006). This realm focuses on communication that allows all stakeholders, interviewers and interviewees to have a “voice” and sense of empowerment when discussing career opportunities.

The change process emerges when shared decision-making and collaboration are balanced. Self-efficacy is an imperative ingredient when shaping employees that can perceive their personal sense of worth in an educational organization. Theory Y management requires utilizing strategies that foster effective collaboration. The Human Resources Department can establish a shared vision within the department with the use of effective communication.

Symbolics also address communication instruments, which can be utilized in the Human Resources Department. The online application process can have a section embedded that requires the applicant to demonstrate technology skills as well as his/her writing skills. Out of the box thinking would also allow for applicants to interview via video, web cam, and PowerPoint presentation. Strategies for assisting the Human Resources Department in building partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education are also addressed in this realm.

Symbolics is comprised of symbols. Symbols and visual aids are paramount forms of expression. With regard to symbols, the Human Resources Department can reflect on the use of symbols and visual aids as tools to promote the mission of the district.

Behavior expectations are addressed in the realm of symbolics. Symbolics provides avenues for educators to communicate expectations for students regarding all facets of school. The Human Resources Department can require applicants to share their prospective regarding behavior expectations for teachers, students and other various stakeholders in education.

### **Empirics**

“The second realm empirics, includes the sciences of the physical world, of living things, and of man” (Kritsonis 2007, pg.12). In this realm, strategies target physical science, biology, psychology and social science. By targeting this realm, the Human Resources Department will work to make sure that all data provided to potential applicants is accurate. All of the necessary tools, equipment, technology and resources available to aid potential employees in accessing current data of the school district will be easily accessible. Guidelines for supporting potential and present employees in staying abreast of the most current district information will be freely disseminated.

The emphasis on physical science in this realm seeks toward “. . . discovery and formulation of general patterns among quantities derived from the process of physical measurement” (Kritsonis 2007, pg.178). In the aspect of physical science, “(a) great amount . . . is based on measurement. Precise calculation depends on precise data collection” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 188). “Much of physical science deals with how things work and why they work that way” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 194) To target this realm, the Human Resources Department would implement techniques that clearly define requirements for specific jobs. “Meanings in biology, as in all other sciences, are empirical, factual, descriptive, and ultimately general and theoretical in orientation” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 202).

The Human Resources Department should implement strategies that target psychology. Knowledgeable experts can implement tools to assess perspective and present employees to ensure that students in the district are gaining information from individuals that are healthy emotionally and mentally. (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 245).

## **Esthetics**

“The third realm, esthetics, contains the various arts, such as music, the visual arts, the arts of movement, and literature” (Kritsonis 2007, pg.12). In this section, the Human Resources Department targets the need for students to be exposed to various forms of beauty as exemplified in the arts. Kritsonis mentions, “Humans teach their children the arts to help them achieve what we consider a well-rounded education” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 284). Kritsonis develops the argument as follows: “. . . exposing them to new and interesting forms of sensory satisfaction” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 284). Beauty is an integral aspect of esthetics.

To target this realm, the Human Resources Department must make provisions to ensure that all employees “. . . spend large amounts of time developing their talents. ” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 290).

The art of movement is another dimension of esthetics. The human body serves as a tool in the art of movement (Kritsonis 2007). Components of esthetics can be addresses in the Human Resources Department by training employers to study body language and movement. Kritsonis develops the scope and span of this dimension as follows:

*The arts of movement, physical education, and health and recreation activities are all closely interrelated Resources for the enrichment of esthetic meaning, both in individual persons and in the life of society* (Kritsonis 2007, pg 334).

In this realm, the Human Resources Department will have measures in place that signify that educators “. . . must see beyond editing and factual representation” (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 374).

Essentially, the esthetic realm functions to discover beauty in humanity. The Human Resources Department must reflect a mission that assists all educators in the school district to recognize the beauty of every stakeholder.

*This also signifies the beauty in each individual student. Every student responds differently to sensory stimuli. Teachers must be knowledgeable and intuitive to highlight the beautiful and esthetically pleasing aspect of every instructional interaction. (Cloud & Kritsonis 2006).*

## Synnoetics

“The fourth realm, synnoetics, embraces . . . ‘personal knowledge’ and the ‘I-Thou’ relation” (Kritsonis 2007, pg.12).

*Given the enhanced accountability standards, all stakeholders in educations must embrace innovative interpersonal techniques and intuitive skills to target the individual needs that exist in a campus. (Cloud & Kritsonis 2006).*

The Human Resources Department must use practices that will prove beneficial to the new incoming generation of students.

*Presently, children are inundated with information and external factors that greatly detract from many educational constructs. Educators must be proactive and strive to be “ahead of the curve” in discovering strategies to personally engage students in individualized meaningful learning activities. (Cloud & Kritsonis,2006).*

## Ethics

“The fifth realm, ethics, includes moral meanings that express obligation rather than fact, perceptual form, or awareness of relation” (Kritsonis 2007, pg.13). Procedures in the Human Resources Department target must morality.

*While it should be very obvious to people that laws are laws and that many people must conform to them for the good of society, many people rationalize and excuse to break the ‘little’ laws. (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 450)*

The Human Resources Department addresses the necessity for all stakeholders to demonstrate high moral character.

*The good life consists in the realization of meanings, in all of the realms: in the ability to communicate intelligibly and forcefully, to organize the experience of sense into significant generalizations and theories with predictive power, to express the inner life in moving esthetic constructions, to relate with others and with oneself in acceptance and love, to act with deliberate responsibility, and to coordinate these meanings into an integrated vision and commitment (Kritsonis 2007, pg. 442).*

## Synoptics

“The sixth realm, synoptics, refers to meanings that are comprehensively integrative” (Kritsonis 2007, pg, 13). The Human Resources Department, can facilitate addressing current research and trends regarding techniques for assisting students in ascending the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, targeting the multiple intelligences and technological advances in education to ensure every student’s success. The Human Resources Department can function to influence synoptics while developing and defining the school district’s culture. When implemented in the Human Resources Department, the preferred educational philosophies upheld in the educational setting will greatly impact and affect the school district’s culture.

Focusing on synoptics in the Human Resources Department helps educational leaders to establish and/or foster a culture that reflects and addresses the needs of all stakeholders. Synoptics can be succinctly described in the Human Resources Department.

## Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the author of this paper examined *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* by Dr. William Allan Kritsonis as a framework that innovative and progressive leaders in education can use to implement and utilize the absolute best practices regarding Human Resources in an educational organization. Dr. Kritsonis’s *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* provides a blueprint for holistically addressing all facets of Human Resources in an educational setting. This paper will explore the six fundamental patterns of the meaning outlined in Dr. Kritsonis’s *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning*: symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics and synoptics to provide guidelines to ensure that all aspects of Human Resources in an educational environment are addressed appropriately and implemented effectively and successfully.

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