

How to Implement the Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning in Human Resource Management Ten Recommendations for Selecting Campus Administrators

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ABSTRACT

Human resource management in education is a vital function of hiring, developing, nurturing, and sustaining highly- qualified personnel for the school system. In an age where strong accountability measures are in place, school districts across America must become aware of the types of teachers and administrative staff being selected and retained for their organizations. As a result ten recommendations on human resource management are made based upon the text *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* by Dr. William Kritsonis to improve the quality of the school leaders across America.

Introduction

Human resource management in education is a vital function of hiring, developing, nurturing, and sustaining highly-qualified personnel for the school system. According to Young and Cassetter (2004), “every employee of an educational organization is influenced by the human resource function. This influence begins prior to employment through recruitment and selection processes and continues throughout the employment period of an individual” (pg. vii). In an age where strong accountability measures are in place, school districts across America must become aware of the types of teachers and administrative staff being selected and retained for their organizations.

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to discuss ten recommendations on how the *Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning* by Dr. William Kritsonis (2007) can be implemented in human resource management at the district level. Ten suggestions will be made to human resource departments in America’s schools that will aide in reducing employee attrition and migration. Human resource management is managing people in order to build, retain, and improve the organizational structure. It is recruiting, selecting, and retaining highly qualified persons to accomplish the goals of the organization. Since education is a service industry, human resources should be managed to evoke social and cognitive change in the lives of its employees.

Recommendations

The Human Resource Managers in school districts must thoroughly analyze the administrator’s philosophy of education to determine his/ her adaptability to a particular campus

According to Hanbury et. al (2004), “leaders of an organization must have an appropriate “fit” with those they lead and with their environment” (p. 566). Hoyle et. al. (2002) writes “personnel recruitment, selection, appointment, development, and promotion is a vital part of school leadership. The staff “makes or breaks” the system. The superintendent, personnel administrator, and building administrators are all part of the district’s personnel management system” (p. 118). Each and every person hired within the school system brings their own personal philosophy to where they work. Choosing the best administrator to work in a particular building is a challenging undertaking. The Human Resource Manager has to be reflective of the culture and

climate of the schools in their district and hire, nurture, train, and develop a particular leadership style that will yield the best results for the campus. As a result, the administrator's philosophy is extremely important for the success of the school he or she is working.

Moreover, English (2003) stresses this exact point when he says that "leaders are transformed by the realities they embrace and so change reality" (p. 29). According to Kritsonis (2002), every stakeholder and campus decision will be assessed according to the leader's axiology or values (p. 99-100). This determines the campus' metaphysics or ultimate reality and has impact on how the epistemology or nature of knowledge is disseminated on campus. Because of this, all staff developments and running of the school would be developed according to the leader's particular philosophy of education which is defined by his or her axiology, epistemology, and metaphysics. Each component of the leader's and stakeholders' philosophies must work together to produce a highly successful team.

The Human Resource Managers must be able to determine the candidates' goals and/or priorities for the administrative position

Kritsonis (2007) writes that "a person is what he does, his existence is determined in the acts that he performs" (p.396). A strong leader has to embrace the fact that "I am responsible for what I decide" and must "make some choice of what he will do with what is presented him" (pp. 396-397). Because of this, Marzano et. al. (2005) emphasizes that "a highly effective school leader can have a dramatic effect on the overall academic achievement of students" (p. 10). Each and every administrative decision made by the educational leader is expected to be reflective of his or her personal knowledge and stresses what he or she deems to be important. This alone has strong implications on how students learn and develop in their school.

Human Resource Managers must be able to select administrators that are knowledgeable of the instructional process

Fullan (2001) writes that the "single most important factor ensuring that all students meet performance goals at the site level is the leadership of the principal" (p. 126). According to Kritsonis (2007),

the educator needs to understand human life as a complex of meanings and to know the various realms of meaning encompass. He also needs to be aware of the enemies of meaning that arise within the human situation and to organize instruction in such a way as to overcome or minimize the threatened meaninglessness. (p. 55)

As a result, the administrator must have a strong grasp of the six realms of meaning- symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics, and synoptics and how each component must be indoctrinated into the school's curriculum.

Administrators have to explain to teachers in staff developments, etc. that the curriculum in which is being exposed to young children must embrace the first realm of meaning that is utilized in all six realms- symbolics. It is a deep understanding of language and symbols. Kritsonis (2007) writes "knowledge of language comprises four elements: use, meaning, symbol, and communication" (p. 109). The true purpose of mathematics, also a part of symbolics, is "designed to achieve complete precision in meaning and rigor in reasoning" (p. 131). Educators must embrace the notion that ordinary language is either discursive or nondiscursive. Discursive language, according to Kritsonis (2007), "is used in customary speech for communicating ideas in a consecutive, connected fashion, following the principals of common logic" (p. 153). Nondiscursive language is symbolic forms "used in all the arts and for the expression of feelings, values, commitments, and insights in the domains of personal knowledge, metaphysics, and religion" (p. 153).

According to Kritsonis (2007), "empirical meanings require ordinary language and mathematics for their expression" (p. 175). Science is the medium for empirics and incorporates physical science, biology, psychology, and social science. "The scientific enterprise is aimed at the discovery of truth" (p. 175). However, "all empirical propositions are provisional, temporary holding good only within the limits established by prior tests and always subject to new revisions in the light of new evidence" (p. 177).

The third realm- esthetics- encompasses music, the visual arts, the arts of movement, and literature. The perspective administrator should be skilled at discovering the beauty in every educational process. Kritsonis (2007) writes "in the esthetic realm, on the other hand, the object of knowledge is the singular particular form. The primary concern is not with types of things- not with the classes of things- but with the unique individual objects" (p. 277). Staff development should be conveyed in a positive light.

The fourth realm of meaning is synnoetics or personal knowledge. Perspective administrators have a sense that

personal knowledge is gained by not only understanding how others, whom one considers significant, sees one as well. If the people that one considers important shun him or her, then he/ she is not likely to accept himself/ herself as important. (Kritsonis, 2007, p. 400)

The role of a strong administrator is one builds the self- esteem of his workers. Since leadership is influencing the behaviors of others, perspective administrators must be mindful of how their actions affect others under their watch.

The fifth realm of meaning is ethics or moral knowledge. Perspective administrators must believe in doing what is right at all times. As the primary leader of the school, the administrator must model what he/she expects from his stakeholders. Ethical administrators produce ethical staff members. This results because an expectation has been put into place. This is further illustrated by Kritsonis (2007) when he adds that “the central concept in the realm of ethics is obligation or what ought to be done. The “ought” here is not individual but a universal principle of right” (p.438).

The final and sixth realm of meaning is synoptics. It embraces history, religion, and philosophy. Kritsonis (2007) defines synoptics as “a term that comprises meanings having an integrative function, uniting meanings from all of the realms into a unified perspective, that is, providing a “single vision” or “synopsis” of meanings” (p. 479). The perspective administrator must be able to explain the historical reasons for learning certain skills and attributes within the confines of his philosophical and religious ideas for selecting a particular topic. Since synoptics is completely integrative with all of the other realms of meaning, it completes the knowledge circle, yet is able to digress into any of the other realms.

If the six realms are not embraced, students will be left feeling frustrated, according to Kritsonis (2007), due to ambiguity, no empiric or absolute truths, art that demonstrates morbidity, confusion, etc., a sense of people not relating to self and others and only thinking about benefiting self, morals that are indoctrinated with doubt and skepticism, history, religion, and philosophy that are biased, and the overall depersonalization and fragmentation of self (losing one’s identity) in the educational system. Learning should not be fragmented by should aim to develop the complete person. Based on the writings of Phenix (1986) and Kritsonis (2007),

a complete person should be skilled in the use of speech, symbol, and gesture, factually well informed, capable of creating and appreciating objects of esthetic significance, endowed with a rich and disciplined life in relation to self and others, able to make wise decisions and to judge between right and wrong, and possessed of an integral outlook. (p. 8)

The development of the complete person is what a strong knowledge of the instructional process should ideally produce.

Human Resources Managers must be able to select administrators that demonstrate personal scholarship in their educational field

Guy (1993) asserts “when it comes to employment, the facts of the matter are that employers want to recruit and retain the best and the brightest” (p. 279). Administrators who are selected to operate a campus should possess a strong body of personal knowledge and be willing to always scan new research based literature to discover new methodologies for improving the educational process at their particular campus. The

well- trained administrator is always reading texts, articles, journals. He or she should make a defined effort to not only attend conferences, but also present findings that aim at refining schools.

Human Resource Managers must be able to select administrators that prepare and deliver staff development in learner- friendly environments that take into account the professional levels of teachers

As teachers progress professionally, administrators must be recognizant of the various types of differentiated staff development that must occur on their respective campuses. Speck (1996) explains that “administrators selected to operate schools need to differentiate staff development on how adults learn” (p. 33). Teachers, like students, have different learning styles. However, unlike students, staff training on the professional level should take into account the Adult Learning Theory. Administrators should also take into consideration that staff development as Kritsonis (2007) writes “should be planned so as to take account of the particular tasks confronting the person at the stage of life in which he is living” (p. 612).

The best learning for teachers in all phases must be in a learner- friendly environment. The learning environment in which the staff development training is to be taught should be teacher friendly. This type of setting will improve achievement and comprehension levels. Learning conditions in the schools where the staff development is presented should provide an ample amount of light, fresh air, and have convenient work space. Administrators and teachers should have access to instructional materials. Classrooms should be equipped with teacher aides so that teachers can solely focus on learning new teaching strategies. In addition, each classroom should have updated technology to assist in teacher learning. Computers, electronic devices, and other programs can be used as a technology tool to reinforce key ideas seen in class. Hopefully, this will lead to strong gains in student achievement and teacher expertise.

Human Resource Managers must be able to select administrators and teachers that are able to implement a strategic plan that takes into account developmental factors

According to McGregor (1988), strategic planning with the human resource management function “depends on learning, and human learning requires time to practice, absorb, tinker, invent, discover, read, imagine, and converse about new products and better ways to do things” (p. 947). Developmental factors set limits to the selection of materials used in staff development. They provide one kind of pattern. These factors do not solely determine the content to be taught to the staff. However, the staff

development should be ordered according to how language, math, art, science, moral knowledge, and religion affect teachers at certain stages of their lives.

Moreover, adult maturity and mental competence play a strong part in how the staff development comes across to teachers. Phenix (1986) emphasizes the idea that “the best curriculum for any student is one that makes each learning experience available to him as soon as he is ready for it” (p. 291). He further notes that “if knowledge is taught too early in a person’s developmental stage, then people will either not understand the information at all or feel a lot of frustration and anxiety when encountered with the staff development” (p.291). However, if knowledge is given too late in a person’s developmental stage, then future learning can be postponed and the teachers’ overall development will be delayed.

According to Bryson (1995), “employees must be able to assess their organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)” (p. 28). By doing this, perspective school employees demonstrate to their employer that they are able to work collaborative in teams. This has implications for perspective administrators because they must be able to allow their staff time to self- assess their individual and collective abilities and limitations. By doing this, administrators hired will be able to gauge the levels of productivity that can be accomplished in any given year and also be able to determine when boundaries should and need to be put into place. Hoyle et. al (2002) finds that “ a well- designed strategic personnel plan embedded in the overall district strategic plan offers a solid first step in creating a human resource process that will guide strong recruitment efforts for the district and each school” (p. 120).

Human Resource Managers must be able to select administrators that believe in creating staff development trainings that involve stakeholders in the decision-making process

Kearney, R. et. al. (1994) reveals that “participative decision- making provides personal benefits to the individual employee as well as desired organizational outcomes” (p. 44). Perspective administrators that are hired should give credence to the idea of professional ownership of individualized training. Veteran teachers know the skills that they are lacking and will acknowledge training. They appreciate self- selecting staff development better than participating in those that are mandated. By having the ability to be a part of the decision- making process, teachers will be able to enjoy what Phenix (1986) calls “the principle of appeal to the imagination.” This “calls for the selection of materials that are drawn from extraordinary rather than from the experience of everyday life. They should be such as to transform ordinary perspectives rather than confirm them” (p. 346). Staff development should inspire teachers to think outside themselves and their current situation. Phenix further states,

It has everything to do with finding materials that have unusual power to speak to persons in the depth of their being by giving them a vision of a new order of life in which they can participate and by which their ordinary existence can be transfigured. (p. 350)

The goal of developing a staff training that speaks to the learners' imagination is to provide a means for teachers to question what they are learning and to be given the chance to change their ways of thinking. This would allow teachers to become critical thinkers who are engaged in the learning process.

Human Resource Managers must select administrators and teachers that have a desire to grow professionally

Administrators who use this ideology will reap the benefits of having a well-trained staff. By choosing administrators and teachers who want to improve and invest in their craft, the organization will reap boundless academic rewards. Sampson, C. (1993) purports that

just as employees may be viewed as an organizational resource, so should an employer view employees as an appropriate resource for which investment is natural; and thus encourage and maximize the development of that resource for the overall good of the organization. (p.158)

According to Kritsonis (2007), the administrator, being a human being, is "in essence a creature who creates, discovers, enjoys, perceives, and acts on meanings" (p. 90). The perspective employee must devise patterns of meaning within his curriculum that demonstrate the six realms of meaning: symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics, and synoptics. These patterns "provide the foundations for all meaning that enter into human experience" (p.4). By doing this, the employee "counteracts the fragmentation of experience" (p. 4).

Administrators should choose materials for the curriculum or current research for staff development that is taken specifically from "the foundations in the sense that enters the human experience" (Kritsonis, 2007, p.14). This does not include information from personal experience. The information in the disciplines is much too large in scope and would not do justice to discussions involving personal knowledge in the classroom. When using the disciplines, time is one of the most important factors to consider when planning. Moreover, educators, in the staff development process, do not need to convey to their staff members the idea that they are the sole authority of knowledge in a particular area. Instead, they should be a source of facts by attempting to provide a good understanding of the discipline. Learning within a discipline has to be productive and should lead to future insight. However, in planning and implementing staff development, perspective administrators should know that every discipline is integrative to some

degree and can make use of materials from other disciplines to gain new insights into the future.

Another key piece in hiring administrators should be their emphasis on developing their employees to become experts in their field. Phenix (1986) writes, “each person should be highly trained in a specialty instead of comprehensively like a generalist” and that the “depth of knowledge and skill should be the goal, rather than superficial acquaintance with a variety of fields” (p. 268). Administrators selected to work in public schools need to take into consideration the main ideas that represent each field. The concepts that staff development trainers and curriculum planners emphasize must be indicative of the discipline being taught. Moreover, these concepts should help the learner formulate other ideas about the subject. In essence, they are used as building blocks of knowledge. Administrators should select specific examples while delivering staff development to staff to exemplify representative ideas in their respective fields.

Human Resource Managers must select administrators that are able to work with diverse groups of people, make work meaningful, and encourage methods of inquiry

Kritsonis (2007) believes that human resource leaders need to select diversity-conscience educators who “understand people in their actualities, in their possibilities, and in their idealities.” The leader must know “how to foster desirable changes in them” (p. 29). School leaders and staff should always be willing to learn new and better ways to work with different types of cultures and races to improve student achievement. As a result, the selected administrators must allow themselves to be immersed in another culture to better understand their experience. This knowledge will provide perspective administrators with tools to better educate their student population and create staff developments that use multicultural research and curriculum-based strategies.

Additionally, Phenix (1986) emphasizes the idea “that for the most effective learning curricula need to be designed as far as practicable to take into account each person’s particular aptitudes and enthusiasm” (p. 275). He further gives credence to his argument when he writes, “Students learn best what they most profoundly want to know. Phenix (1986) writes “their learning efficiency is in direct relation to their motivation. Hence, the materials of instruction should be selected in light of the students’ real interest” (p. 345). This ideology conveys a strong message to educators in the staff development planning and integration process. The research-based presentation needs to be chosen in a manner that will maximize meanings for teachers. If teachers’ interests are taken into account when planning, then administrators will see more learning occurring in the sessions and teachers will be better prepared to implement new methodologies and improve student achievement across all disciplines.

Phenix (1986) writes it best when he states, “His real longing is for meaning, and whether he recognizes it or not, all his striving, whatever its apparent object, is directed toward the enlargement and deepening of meaning” (p. 344). This should be the primary

goal of all educators when planning staff development for the school. Teachers strive to attain a sense of meaning in all discipline taught and discussed within the classroom. If teachers are able to define their own meanings in the six realms, then administrators can truly say that they have done their jobs. Moreover, when teachers can validate their knowledge with meaning, they are able to make sense of their environment, take ownership of their learning, and are motivated to learn more about the unknown that surrounds them.

Finally, administrators should design staff development that has methods of inquiry as a means to incite active engagement by teachers in their own learning process. The suggestion is that teachers learn better when they are not just passive recipients of information. Teachers are able to construct their own knowledge through methods of inquiry and become active participants in their own learning. Methods of inquiry should be included in a staff development that organizes studies according to disciplines. Educators should take a special note to teach inquiry in staff development as what Phenix (1986) calls “a program of guided rediscovery, in which the student discovers for himself what others have found out before him” (p. 336). Moreover, Phenix (1986) emphasizes that this level of inquiry must not only be reenacted under similar conditions as others before him, but also should include looking at the teachers’ prior knowledge and level of advancement in the subject area (p. 337). As a result, this process will give teachers the opportunity to discover new information to implement into the classroom and to validate prior knowledge.

Human Resource Managers must select administrators that are ethical, have a vision for their campus, and have a desire to genuinely involve their stakeholders in making the vision a reality

Kritsonis (2007) writes “education is a means of helping human beings to become what they can and should become” (p. 29). Human resource leaders “must initiate and champion the process” (Bryson, 1995, p. 57). Potential administrators must be able to have a well- defined plan on where they desire to move their organization. In order to do this, they must mobilize the best teachers for the job. Collins (2001) illustrates this belief when he says that “leaders at the top of their respective fields surround themselves with the right people to do the job” (p. 42).

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, district human resource administrators must be deeply involved in the selection of new administrators. Ten recommendations for selecting new campus administrators are given to assist Human Resource Managers in hiring the best

candidates. The Human Resource Managers in school districts must be able to thoroughly analyze the administrator's philosophy of education to determine his/her adaptability to a particular campus, determine the candidates' goals and/or priorities for the administrative position, select administrators that are knowledgeable of the instructional process, select administrators that demonstrate personal scholarship in their educational field, and select administrators that prepare and deliver staff development in learner- friendly environments that take into account the professional levels of teachers.

Furthermore, Human Resource Managers should select administrators and teachers that are able to implement a strategic plan that takes into account developmental factors, select administrators that believe in creating staff development trainings that involve stakeholders in the decision- making process, select administrators and teachers that have a desire to grow professionally, select administrators that are able to work with diverse groups of people, make work meaningful, and encourage methods of inquiry, select administrators that are ethical, have a vision for their campus, and have a desire to genuinely involve their stakeholders in making the vision a reality. They should be looking for people with positive attitudes and those who possess a large body of knowledge for whatever subject matter they want to represent to students. The perspective administrator must be skilled with defining meaning for staff members in the types of activities and concepts in which they want to convey. In essence, the perspective employee must be able to define his axiology, have a great undertaking of his epistemology, and be flexible enough to analyze, assess, and evaluate the metaphysical aspects of his job.

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