

Nancy Hartman, Ph.D.

Research Agenda

Opening Statement:

For the past decade, strategic planning initiatives have been at the forefront of school improvement. The ultimate goal of higher student achievement has resulted in Federal legislation (NCLB) as well as state and local initiatives. While disagreement exists as to specific ways and means for achieving student success, it is widely accepted that specific elements must be in place for achievement to take place. These variables include, but are not limited to, academic rigor, safety, effective communication with all stakeholders, and the need for motivated, highly qualified teachers who meet the diverse needs of the students. It is the elements of “effective communication with all stakeholders” and “highly qualified teachers” that the core of my research agenda addresses.

While a small number of articles have been written regarding the possibility of Knowledge Management (KM) being integrated into the K-12 educational system and a minimal number of research studies have been conducted in the area of higher education, there is a need for research in the area of KM as it relates to effective organizational congruence and behavioral alignment of school faculty and administrators at the primary and secondary level of educational organizations.

KM is a management practice which focuses on getting the right resources to the right people at the right time...all of the time. KM evolved out of the Information Technology arena in business and industry 25 years ago, has become a primary force in industry and the military, and is beginning to infiltrate Higher Education. KM seeks to connect and train personnel (sharing both explicit and tacit organizational knowledge) through both synchronous and asynchronous formats.

Since technology is at the core of KM implementation, it is a field which can meet many needs of educational organizations. It is my goal to continue the research I began in my dissertation (*Organizational Congruence, Knowledge Management & Behavioral Alignment in Primary and Secondary Schools*) which was subsequently published by a German publishing company.

Plan for Educational Research

Currently, I am working as a library/media specialist in a 9-12 school and am working with IT personnel to implement KM strategies within our individual school. I am also actively seeking out a Black-belt Six-Sigma efficiency specialist to work with in creating an education-based efficiency assessment tool.

Because KM is a new field of study for K-12 organizations, field studies through pilot programs can be conducted to determine if KM, if introduced effectively, can positively affect communication, professional development and ultimately district-wide congruence. KM processes can also extend to the student population. I am currently working with IT personnel to conduct action research to assess implementation both within our individual school as well as system-wide.

The following is a list of topics or problems I hope to be able to research regarding the implementation of KM in the K-12 arena. The list is a result of the questions raised during the course of my doctoral and subsequent study:

1. Further develop the definition of KM within a K through 12 educational setting.
2. Compare KM implementation within varying organizational types (e.g., large school systems vs. smaller systems; public vs. private systems; Public vs. Charter or Homeschooling groups; K through 12 vs. higher education systems).
3. Explore the dichotomy of low expectation of intellectual capital among leaders and staff within educational settings.
4. Compare the time and cost required of face-to-face professional development and virtual professional development.

5. Determine the correlation of senior leaders' technology comfort level to teachers' technology comfort level.
6. Determine the optimal time and type(s) of training needed for effective implementation of KM within K-12 organizations.
7. Determine the correlation between effective KM implementation and student achievement
8. Compare the implementation of face-to-face communities of practice with virtual communities.

The following is a list of topics or problems that could be researched regarding the relationship between behavioral alignment and organizational congruence. The list is a result of the questions raised during the course of this study.

1. Identify effective combinations of generative and traditional leadership strategies.
2. Determine the correlation between organizational health and student achievement.
3. Determine the correlation between teacher alignment to district initiatives and student achievement.
4. Determine how the motivation and attitude of teachers affects the success of students.
5. Determine the strategic value of communities of practice on organizational health.

The following is a list of topics or issues which could be researched regarding KM implementation in the charter/homeschooling organizations.

1. Determine the existing structures which link homeschooling parents.
2. Determine if linking structures within homeschooling areas provide Communities of Practice (CoPs) and other asynchronous resources/training for parents/cooperatives and charter schools.
3. Identify possible funding enterprises for implementing KM structures to support homeschooling cooperatives and charter schools.

Final Reflections

KM, as a management philosophy, is designed to create an atmosphere of knowledge-sharing and life-long learning, which is the primary function of educational systems. The incorporation of KM techniques allows for a more practical and feasible method for fulfilling the desire of the teachers, administrators and senior leaders to have a district-wide culture of learning and professionalism, while not taking away from the primary focus of student achievement. While some professional development techniques strive to increase effectiveness and others focus on efficiency, KM has the potential to increase both.

Implementation of KM will certainly not be an easy effort. With so many K-12 senior leaders and educators uncomfortable with existing technology, the response to the possible implementation of KM will probably be decidedly unenthusiastic. Many educators also feel that too much emphasis has been placed on the implementation of technology, also causing resistance. However, every participant in my doctoral study also struggled with the paradox of having to choose between being with students or participating in meaningful professional development. Many districts have chosen to conduct professional development outside of school time in order for teachers to not be away from students, but teachers struggle with this as well. While they do not want to be away from their students, they also resent being required to attend professional development during off-duty hours when they are not paid and they are required to be away from their families. KM, while not being a magic pill to solve this dilemma, addresses the issue and offers solutions. In the homeschooling/charter school arena, resistance is not as likely, but implementation would require a more grassroots effort since these are very loosely coupled organizations.