TOWARD STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE CENTRAL OFFICE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore how human resources are managed and what organizational issues, tensions, and ambiguities surface as a district central office moves toward being more strategic with their human resources. A mid-sized Midwestern school district was studied over two academic years using an exploratory case study design. Using literature on successful districts and organizational management theories of strategic human resource management and high reliability organizations, the researcher explored: (1) what it means for a district to be strategic and (2) how a district goes about being strategic (what it looks like), particularly regarding their human resources.

Findings of this research project indicated that defining strategic in this district meant having foresight, pre-emptively planning, and using knowledge-based innovation as a leader, in order to align everything to district goals. Findings also indicated that the act of being strategic in this district focused on two key elements: systemic functions and strategic leadership. Acting strategically meant moving from ‘sil-o-ed’ functions to more systemic structures, policies, and procedures. However, strategic leadership was necessary to guide strategic behaviors, six attributes of which were elicited from this case study. Findings also indicated that internal and external environments held influential roles in the strategic functions and actions of district leaders.