



Doctor of Education: Leadership, Learning and Community

Defense Date

July 18th, 2020

Title

A Study on the Diffusion of a Pilot Program at an International School in China

Introduction

International schools are engaging in adopting a 21st century learning approach to prepare students for a rapidly changing world. International schools across East Asia are piloting innovative programs that promote 21st century learning in school-within-school programs.

Problem of Practice

Many pilot programs remain in isolation and struggle to diffuse across the larger organization and create sustainable change.

Research Method

Using Everett M. Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovation model to frame this qualitative study of an international school in China, data sources collected include individual interviews and document review. 20 interviewees participated in the study. In-vivo, provision and values coding methods were the primary methods of analysis.

Summary of Findings

The analysis revealed a lack of lines of communication between both programs which led to the pilot program's isolation. Co-teaching with teachers in the pilot program improved perceptions of the innovation. Instructional coaches are instrumental in cross-pollinating ideas

between both programs because they create informal lines of communication. The perception of top-down initiatives impedes the diffusion process and innovativeness of stakeholders.

Innovativeness improves when a team's collaborative norms are focused on developing solutions by reflecting on learning.

Limitation(s) of Study

The researcher's personal experience, beliefs, and participation in the program under study influence the research process. As a single case study, this investigation is limited by its size and uniqueness of its context as the program under consideration closed during the study.

The COVID-19 outbreak presented a circumstance that would be difficult to replicate.

Implications

This study reveals Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation model remains relevant to educational leadership, and the Perceived Characteristics of Innovating is a useful tool for analyzing the adoption process. These findings indicate that diffusion is a social process that requires a plan for maintaining clear lines of communication, visibility, and collaboration to build buy-in from all stakeholders and increase the rate of adoption.