

Course Synthesis
EDU 5419 Advanced Study of Organizational Theory
Professor Frank Smith
Fall 2012

EDU 5419, Advanced Study of Organizational Theory, acquainted Cohort 11 members to the nuances and complexities associated with different perspectives on theory building. EDU 5419 focused on three focal points: different perspectives on theory building in educational administration, contemporary views of theory building with an emphasis on Gareth Morgan and the Chicago research team led by Anthony Bryk, and the intellectual tasks associated with the writings of Chapter 2 for a dissertation which involves creating a conceptual framework.

Of the many assignments, the one that resonated with me the most, required cohort members to analyze a school's web site and select a metaphor to explain the nature of the school. Additionally, we visited two high schools: North East High School in Philadelphia in 1968 and Central Park East High School in Harlem in 1994 by means of viewing two documentaries by Frederic Wiseman. Our task was to capture the hidden curriculum of the schools and to express the hidden curriculum evident. The metaphors summarized the theory of practice expressed in the life of both high schools. Dr. Smith advised us to observe the films carefully and closely in order to analyze the critical incidents that capture the schools' cultures. After viewing the two films, we met in groups to discuss metaphors for the two high schools. Following the discussion of the series of vignettes, the cohort, along with Dr. Smith's sage advice, drew the conclusion that North East High School could best be described as a "Boot Camp" and Central Park East High School's metaphor could best be described as "Powerful Conversations."

Dr. Smith implemented Moodle to post our individual and group assignments. As Cohort 11 members responded to the tasks presented by Dr. Smith, we would also read and critiqued the

responses of our colleagues. Throughout the coursework, we examined conceptual frameworks and how we apply them to current research on leadership theory.

The most important notion highlighted from this course was that if educational leaders want to change schools, first and foremost they have to change the metaphor. EDU 5419 was an extremely beneficial, as well as practical course, especially for doctoral students who aspire to serve as Central Office Administrators. The information shared and presented by Dr. Smith was timely and relevant to the issues that 21st century educational leaders must be prepared to assume.