

S.J.U. EDU 5743-Course Synthesis – Course Synthesis, Fall 2010

Dr. Taylor-Dunlop

Cohort 11 Collaboration

“Sustainable educational leadership and improvement preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefits for others around us, now and in the future.”

(Hargreaves and Fink 2006, p.17)

On a brisk September evening in 2010, cohort 11 pulled into the parking lot of St. John’s University, Oakdale, NY. We parked our cars, and hurriedly walked toward the door which led to the beginning of a fortuitous journey of self exploration, discovery, and professional renewal. After years of reflecting upon our careers in education, we launched into the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and Accountability at St. John’s University.

Cohort 11 was greeted by a warm, congenial professor, Dr. Korynne Taylor-Dunlop, who quickly eased the apprehension, worries, and fears of all present in the corner classroom. Dr. Dunlop outlined the goals, expectations, and challenges that lie ahead with steadfast assurance that each one of us could attain what only 10% of the population has previously accomplished.

The focus of EDU 5743-Planned Changed in Education was just that: planned changed in education, conceptually and practically. Cohort 11 analyzed different matrices, models, and theoretical frameworks to evaluate planned change in

educational settings. These theoretical frameworks were used to examine organizational challenges and to develop constructivist strategies for sustainable educational leadership and improvement.

Cohort 11 studied theoretical frameworks via the text, *Sustainable Leadership* by Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink. The seven essential principles of sustainability outlined by Hargreaves and Fink are:

1. Depth: Sustainable leadership matters. We preserve, protect and promote in education what is itself sustaining as an enrichment of life.
2. Length: Sustainable leadership lasts. It preserves and advances the most valuable aspects of life over time.
3. Breadth: Sustainable leadership spreads. It sustains as well as depends on the leadership of others.
4. Justice: Sustainable leadership does no harm to and actively improves the surrounding environment. It is not self-centered: it is socially just.
5. Diversity: Sustainable leadership promotes cohesive diversity. It fosters and learns from diversity in teaching and learning and moves things forward by creating cohesion and networking among its richly varied components.
6. Resourcefulness: Sustainable leadership develops and does not deplete material and human resources. It renews people's energy and does not drain its leaders dry through innovation overload or unrealistic timelines for change.
7. Conservation: Sustainable leadership honors and learns from the best of the past to create an even better future. It is steadfast about preserving and renewing its longstanding purpose (2006, pp. 19-21).

These seven essential principles for sustainable leadership influence how educational leaders approach any aspect of change; they reveal that the challenge is to move beyond the micromanagement of standardization and seek to genuinely improve education for all students. Educational leaders must be willing to learn from the past, controversy, and diversity in order to glean from one another perspectives that provide insight for a brighter future. According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and extraordinarily difficult to sustain. Hence, our goal as the leaders of this charge must include a framework of sustainability; one which matters, spreads, lasts, and stretches across many leaders.

Dr. Dunlop introduced and explained the seminal theoretical framework of Dr. Smith's ADC model based on instruction, governance, organization and accountability. The cohort extensively studied the framework of the Popekewitz model of education through the lenses of technical, illusory, and constructivist schools. The class also studied the works of Wehlage, Resnick, Bolman and Deal, and Stone. We gained an understanding of applying a theoretical framework as a lens in which to look through when identifying problems, proposing solutions, and perpetuating change initiatives within school settings.

“As a community we won’t succeed unless we are doing it together, until all voices are heard, we will not learn. We have an obligation to use each other’s experience. Find excuses to have people contribute” (Dunlop, 2010). The St. John’s University Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and Accountability philosophy is constructivist: In order to remain focused on improving instruction and increasing student achievement for all students, educational leaders must foster collaboration and create opportunities for teachers to engage in deep meaningful conversations about best practice, patterns of practice, and student learning.