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EDU 5420 - Politics in Education

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Civic Capacity - Clarence N. Stone

Assignment: Now that we have D.Stone's framework in mind as a conceptual framework for the analysis of school management models, we turn to the first model. Clarence Stone studied a set of urban centers to examine how urban school reform works. His research led to the concept of "civic capacity" as a central aspect of school regimes. His model is one of community development. A primary work of his is provided as text, along with a separate definition. We will conduct a "thematic analysis" of his report to capture the main ideas of his model.

I. El Paso

Common Goals-

- Have the University take a larger role in the community
 - She was a stake holder
- Chose to do a systematic public school educational reform
- Increase level of college enrollment in the community
- Achieve equity and systemic reform
- Collaboration – maintained dual concern
 - Respond to changing economy
 - Hispanic and minority groups
 - “Parent engagement Seminar”

Process-

- Initiate actors who have high civic standing and credibility
- “The Collaborative” was created and made up of the following:
 - Major local govt officials (mayor / county executive)
 - 3 school superintendents (key educationl figures)
 - Representatives of Business and Educatinal Centers
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Greater El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- President of Community College
- Director of Regional Service Center for Texan Education Agency
- Sister Maribeth Larkin – Lead organizer of El Paso Interdenominational Sponsoring Organization (EPISO)

- The collaborative thus was launched at a time when there was a recognized need for a more inclusive form of cooperation
- The collaborative represented a response to the concerns of educators, the community, and the business sector. It also provided common ground as the city's past of Anglo domination gave way to a more diverse pattern of leadership
- Collaborative and a leading business figure co-chaired an Educational Summit to bring together more than 300 participants
- Skillful framing

Resources-

Main actors brought together sponsors. The El Paso Collaborative has enjoyed substantial corporate and foundational support that enables it to employ full-time professionals and, offer high-quality and focused professional development.

- Major Players -
 - Cola Cola
 - Pew charitable Trusts
 - National Science Foundation

II. Philadelphia

Problems-

- Community Wide Problem
- 1/3 population lost due to urban flight
- 4/5 of manufacturing jobs lost
- High taxes
- Low assistance from state
- Per pupil expenditures low
- Teacher union prone to striking
- Resist major reform in past
- Dismal educational performance
- Mutual blame is common place
- Weakness in school was seen as a cause of economic decline
- Every major group blamed each other for problems
- No civic support
- Backed by business (up until 1992)
- Newspapers publicized poor performances of school
- Governor was against school system (seen as hopeless) – 1994

Common Goals-

- Student achievement
- Standard based reform
- “All students can achieve”

- Ongoing assessment of accountability

Process-

- Created initiative and reform plan
- Brought commissioner from Kentucky / Maryland
- Hornbeck – Started plan
 - Wanted achievement and equity
- Systemic Reform of Student Achievement
- People not impressed with progress even though faster than other districts
- Conflict between city and state
- Governor did not wanted to give more money
 - Pushed voucher plans
- Not sustained from businesses
- PFD teachers union were obstructionists who saw accountability as a threat!
- Accountability mechanism was put in place before curriculum and PD
- Goal to get Parents Involved – this failed and was left only to local school staff leadership
- Erosion of business support – they had it in beginning
- Parents were not seen as a critical part of process
- Professional development for faculty
- Rhetoric of parent engagement
- Teachers and Principals to join reform – (this failed)
- School performance – improve it!

Resources-

- Procured a grant from Annenberg Challenge grant (50 million) for a five-year period.
- It was matched by 100 million from Philadelphia business and foundations and from Federal Grant
- Federal Grants – Greater Philly First – Funded Grant

III. Findings

Civic capacity is defined as a collective approach to problem solving and achieving a common goal, which uses cross sectional efforts to address community wide problems. (C. Stone) Applying this definition as a back drop for analysis of reform for the El Paso School System there are common elements. The key elements underlining El Paso's success, was the ability to identify the community wide problems, identify and agree on common goals, then to implement a process involving key actors from the community. At the start of the initiative, reformers in El Paso established The El Paso Collaborative For Academic Excellence (The Collaborative). El Paso was able to enlist key educational figures such as school superintendents, higher educational leaders, civic leaders, politicians such as the mayor and executive director of the regional service center of the Texas Educational Agency and the president of the community college. Sister Maribeth Larkin, lead organizer for El Paso Interdenominational Sponsoring Organization (EPISO) was included in the process. Once the actors are identified there should be a collective approach to solve the problem. The El Paso case study illustrates the importance

of agreeing upon a common goal, and finding the right people to carry out interests. What is learned from the efforts of The Collaborative is that equity and systemic reform can be achieved when you are able to align key players from the community and sufficient resources to a common goal.

On the other hand, the Philadelphia case study fell short of sustaining civic support in achieving its common goal. Moreover finances played a major role in the plan's demise. Business relationships eroded, parental involvement was not developed and political figures could not agree upon the goals which led to a decrease in civic capacity.

Stone indicates key elements to increasing civic capacity such as identifying common goals; the inclusion of members of the community to form a reform coalition (including support from governing officials and the business sector); the procurement of financial resources; and parental involvement. El Paso's Collaborative was successful in accomplishing this process, and thus civic capacity improved. Common goals were met and problems such as parental involvement were solved.