We Learned Some Nice Theories – Now What?

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Here are some things you may have already gotten from the Key Experience. Check all that apply:

- I have a foundation of ideas and concepts to build upon.
- I learned ideas and concepts that are like substitutes for experience.
- I see and respond to things differently and more effectively.
- I find myself being more thoughtful about what and how I do things.
- I learned a lot about myself and approach situations differently now.
- I feel clearer and more confident in ambiguous situations.
- I find myself being more of a mentor to others than in the past.
- I see more connections between what I do and other dynamics in the workplace.
- I am ready for more difficult and challenging responsibilities.
Now, for Today:

- Think for a moment about what you hope to get out of today, and what you will do to help make that happen.

- OK, Let’s get started.
You’ve Learned a Lot of Theories, So What is Next?

- Further learning and integration as situations and your career change.
- Becoming a “practical theorist” by developing and sharing your emerging theories of practice with others.
Further Integration Means:

- Building on what you know and adding to it.
- It also means linking different aspects of yourself into a coherent and powerful “whole” that guides who you are and what you do.
- One of those aspects is your knowledge of theory, but there are others.
What Guides What You Do?

HEAD:
Theories
Concepts

HANDS:
Practices
Processes

HUNCHES:
Gut
Intuition

HEART:
Feelings
Values

EXTERNAL

ABSTRACT

CONCRETE

INTERNAL
What Guides You?

- External ideas, practices, internal intuitions, feelings, etc?
- Do you have a primary way with others being more secondary?
- Are there any you underutilize?
- What if you worked on expanding and integrating all of them?
What Guides What I Do?

Maybe if I smile they’ll think I know what I am doing.

Better yet; I’ll write a book!
How do I Integrate, Balance, and Apply all Four Modalities?
Developing What Guides You

- As you experience the conference reflect some on what most guides you presently: Head, Heart, Hunches, Hands.
- Reflect on how you might develop and integrate these ways of knowing and doing further.
- See if there is anything today that might add to one or more of these aspects.
- Think about what you might want to develop further in the months and years ahead: learn more theory, develop and clarify values, develop and trust your intuition, seek hands-on experiences in new areas, and integrating all of them.
Becoming a Practical Theorist

- What does that mean?
- How do I do it?
In common usage, the word *theory* is often used to signify a conjecture, an opinion, or a speculation. In this usage, a theory is not necessarily consistently consistent with true descriptions of reality.

“That may be true in theory, but…”

So we often implicitly dichotomize theory and practice; and then value one over the other.
Theory Definitions

1. A mere conjecture or guess.
2. A speculative idea or plan as to how something might be done.
3. A formulation of apparent relationships or underlying principles of certain observed phenomena which has been verified to some degree.
As Kurt Lewin Famously Said:

“Many psychologists working today in an applied field are keenly aware of the need for close cooperation between theoretical and applied psychology. This can be accomplished in psychology, as it has been accomplished in physics, if the theorist does not look toward applied problems with highbrow aversion and if the applied psychologist realizes that there is nothing so practical as a good theory.”

What Theories Do You Use re:

- Individual, team and/or organizational behavior
- Leadership
- Power and conflict
- Change
- Working in the bureaucracy
- Your technical or functional field(s)
- The US system of public administration
- And, what topic(s) do you wish there were some good theories available? (Have you looked recently?)
And, furthermore, if both public administration scholars and practitioners realize that there is nothing so theoretical as a good practice (that is grounded in clear and explainable premises, assumptions, beliefs, values, and intuition).

Practice also leads to theory:
- Theories of practice (how to motivate others, how to deal with stakeholders, how to deal with conflict, how to handle a specific type of situation …)
- New theories that emerge from your trying things out or trying something new or different…

But, only if someone reflects on what happens, organizes it into premises and principles, and “publishes” it (advice to others, presentations, papers, etc.)
Developing Your Theory of Practice

- What do you do/know that might be special, different, unique?
- Could you explain it to someone else such that they could do it?
- When will you share it with others, or otherwise present and refine it? Have you considered writing it up for publication somewhere?
- What’s your theory now about you as a practical theorist, or as a continuing learner and contributor?
Closing Questions & Comments

- Questions ?????????????????

- Comments <<<<<<<<<<<

- Applause for all of us!