ED 343 246   EA 023 791

AUTHOR   Conley, David T.; And Others
TITLE   The "Vision Thing" and School Restructuring.
INSTITUTION   Oregon School Study Council, Eugene.
REPORT NO   ISSN-0733-2548
PUB DATE   92
NOTE   9p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publication Sales, Oregon School Study Council,
                University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR
                97403 ($6.00 prepaid; $2.00 postage and handling on
                billed orders).
PUB TYPE   Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT   OSSC Report; v32 n2 p1-8 Win 1992

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Administrator Attitudes; *Change Strategies;
                *Creative Thinking; *Educational Change; Educational
                Environment; Educational Improvement; Elementary
                Secondary Education; Participative Decision Making;
                Principals; Public Schools; School District Autonomy;
                *School Restructuring; Teacher Attitudes;
                *Visualization
IDENTIFIERS   *Oregon; *Strategic Planning

ABSTRACT
        This article explores the role of vision and
vision-building in public schools as a tool for bringing about a
redirection of educational institutions. A reanalysis of 32
interviews with teachers and principals in schools involved in
Oregon's "2020 School Improveme' nd Professional Development"
program revealed that most scho   .ls demonstrated a desire to
develop new teaching skills and s..   .gies through various inservice
activities. Numerous quotations from the interviews illustrate how
these educators utilized the concept of a vision and a process of
vision-building to bring about significant change. The next section
considers the process of vision-building, including possible
prerequisites and some suggestions for a systematic approach to
vision-building at the school level. Finally, seven tentative
conclusions are offered regarding the role of vision in the process
of school restructuring. (7 references) (MLF)

OSSC REPORT

The "Vision Thing" and School Restructuring

David T. Conley, Diane M. Dunlap, Paul Goldman

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President Bush was vexed by what he described as "the vision thing," the complaints frequently expressed by friend and foe that he had not presented a coherent and compelling vision of where he wanted America to go and how he would get us there.

The President was not alone in his concern: CEOs, college and university presidents, school superintendents, and principals are increasingly expected to have and convey a vision and to use symbols to manage and lead effectively. Large corporations adorn their stationery with and build their advertising campaigns around pithy slogans designed to capture and communicate their key values. Increasingly school faculties participate in vision-building sessions of varying type and purpose.

The role of vision in shaping the direction and purpose of organizations is a topic that has received considerable attention during the 1980s. As the pace of change accelerates throughout economic and social institutions worldwide, the ability of these organizations to refocus or rapidly readjust their direction becomes increasingly important to their survival. Many organizations long equated with stability and longevity have lost their viability in short spans of time. Some have already disappeared from the scene; for others, it seems to be only a matter of time.

This is to be expected in a market-driven economy based on the principles of free enterprise. The future of public institutions is less clear in such an environment. While the need for adaptation and change by public institutions is well documented, the process for bringing about such fundamental change and the consequences of failing to do so are less clear than in the private sector.

This article explores the role of vision and vision-building in public schools as a tool for bringing about a redirection of educational institutions. It considers the societal forces that are creating a need for schools to rethink their purposes and processes at a fundamental level. It begins with an examination of data collected from schools within Oregon that were utilizing the concept of a vision and a process of vision-building to bring about significant change. Then we consider the process of vision-building, including possible prerequisites and some suggestions for a systematic approach to vision-building at the school level. We conclude with a brief summary of some of the key issues.

What Is 'Vision'?

The concept of "vision" in and of itself presents problems for investigators. It is not easily defined nor operationalized. In some respects its definition seems analogous to that offered by many for art: They may not be able to articulate what makes something art, but they recognize it when they see it. Similarly, writers on the topic and participants in the process respond that they seem to understand more or less intuitively what a vision is when they see it.

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For the purposes of this article, we define *vision* as a shared agreement, explicitly stated in some form, by a significant number of participants in an organizational unit, on a mixture of values, beliefs, purposes, and goal, that serves to provide a clear reference point for members of the organizational unit to use when making decisions about their behavior in the organizational context, and that is clear enough to enable them to choose behaviors that help move the organization toward the general values, beliefs, purposes, or goals contained in the vision statement.

Stated differently, vision seems to provide an internal compass for people in complex organizations that helps them understand more clearly how their actions relate to, or contribute to, broader organizational goals. At its best, vision and mission provide, or restore, a sense of purpose and meaning to workers for whom such a sense has been lost or never existed.

Research Methodology

For this research we looked at schools that were involved at least modestly in restructuring efforts. At such sites, we would have anticipated that a school vision or mission might be a precondition or a goal that leaders and/or staff would attempt to develop or project. Alerted by our earlier research on facilitative power (Goldman and others 1991), we reanalyzed thirty-two interviews with teachers and principals in schools involved in Oregon's "2020 School Improvement and Professional Development" program (2020 refers to its House Bill number).

A common thread ran through the majority of the 2020 schools. Most school goals demonstrated a desire to develop new teaching skills and strategies through various inservice activities. It was evident that the 2020 program required schools to develop and/or demonstrate involvement by at least several faculty in school

decision-making. More general participation and increased collaboration seemed to be likely, but not inevitable, consequences. In analyzing the proposals of the fifty-one schools with two-year funding, we identified sixteen that highlighted increased collaboration as a central schoolwide goal. Data were gathered in February and early March 1991.

The original sample of sixteen sites included six high schools in or around three metropolitan areas; four were located in predominantly middle-class communities and the other two in working-class communities. The high schools averaged seventy certified staff each. Three middle schools were included, one in a city and two in smaller outlying communities. The middle schools were smaller, averaging thirty-two certified staff members. We also interviewed staff in six elementary schools in urban and rural communities. The elementary schools had about twenty-two certified staff each. Of the principals, seven were men and six were women. Finally, we visited one educational service district (ESD), a county-level education unit in an urban area with primary responsibilities in the area of special education. The ESD had seventy-five certified staff who were mostly special education teachers serving school sites. The four added schools included two high schools, a middle school, and an elementary school.

The open-ended questions made for answers of varying length. All interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim by the researchers.

In analyzing the transcripts, it became clear that respondents saw changes in authority structures as an inherent part of the "2020 process," and they described at length principal behaviors and staff behaviors.

School Visions

Educators in these schools talked easily of vision. At some points in the interviews

the term emerged spontaneously; in other cases, it was prompted by specific questions about whether the school had developed a school vision and about what impact it had. The terms "vision" and "mission" were used more or less interchangeably, but both were distinguished from "goals," which were considered to be much more specific. The following statement explains the distinctions educators seem to be making:
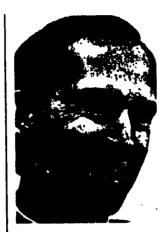
> The gist of (our vision) is that every child is capable of success and we want them to learn as ˙ ˙ch as they can.... Actually, we are far enough along in this process that the goals are a lot more useful in setting daily activities than the vision statement... the goals are more specific and therefore more helpful and practical.

Generally vision statements had a written dimension. They were put to paper, highlighted by signs around the school, or made their way onto stationery or wallet-sized cards. These artifacts were significant, but more interesting is the extent to which these respondents carried the vision in their heads. Consider these examples:

> I can't give you the exact words but... the vision I have is that developing, having an atmosphere where students can feel safe enough to pursue becoming responsible, contributing members of society, the world. I think it also includes skills to become lifelong learners; learning how to learn and continuing to learn.

> If you ask the majority of the staff what they thought (the school's) vision is, I don't think they could state it. If you asked them what it is (the school) wants to do, the majority of the staff would have the same common statements about the what we are about.

In many of the schools, vision represented a commonality, a collective, agreed-upon understanding of what is important in regard to where the school is or should be going. As one person put it,

From left to right: *David T. Conley, Diane M. Dunlap, and Paul Goldman*

People are talking the same language, they have the same kinds of informal expectations for one another, more common ground.

In analyzing and coding the interview data, we found three contexts in which teachers and principals discussed school visions or missions: (1) content; (2) the politics of the vision, including the process by which the vision developed and the relationship between the school vision and the individual's professional self-concept; and (3) the effects of school visions on individual and collective behavior inside the school.

The Vision's Content

Several vision statements specifically addressed the learning environment and school climate, emphasizing a respectful, caring attitude toward students. We did not explore with interviewees their interpretation of what problems the vision was originally supposed to address. However, it seems evident that the statements below indicate a belief that many students have not found in schools the comforting, supportive environment they need in order to learn.

> Maintain a positive climate or positive atmosphere among the staff and the students that results in achievement for as many students as possible.

A vision of the school as a place where we treat people better than other schools do, that kids will behave as adults if they are treated like adults, that there are no class differences. The above attitudes are to be held by everyone in the school, including secretaries and custodians.

If the vision statements in some schools deal primarily with the affective domain, in others it was focused on needs that might be specific to a given student or group of students. Note that these schools, while not homogeneous, were stratified more by social class and individual learning abilities than by ethnic or racial diversity. Hence, the orientation toward diversity came more through direct interpretation of student experiences rather than through a specifically political process that may have emanated from pressures being exerted by the larger community. This element of the vision seems to have been professional rather than political.

Even where the vision is more specifically curricular, the content is influenced by cognizance both of affective needs and of the demands for a diversity of programs to meet diverse capabilities and learning styles.

> Everyone can say integration, innovation, collaboration. Some would say it was vision, some would say it is a motto.... There are very few people who wouldn't recognize that what we're

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after is improving school climate, what it will take in the 21st century for students to survive, and the curriculum that will aim for that.

(This) middle school is an innovative, unique, exploratory education experience for students.... The skills of each student are expanded by utilizing continuous challenge in an ongoing learning experience.

There is a strong sense of students and staff, and wanting to be a school of excellence.

This last quote is interesting because it illustrates that locally derived school visions depart rather markedly from national or even state reform rhetoric. Recent reformers have emphasized "excellence," driven by international competition and defined or at least measured by standardized tests. In fact, the school that stressed excellence was the one in which the vision seemed least actualized and in which there appeared to be most skepticism:

It is difficult to have a "trickle down effect" influence behavior. It is still easy to go in a classroom, close the door, and teach what you want. We spend a lot of time talking about vision, which is pretty lofty.

By contrast, in most schools visions emerged from staff members' experience and represented a codification of appropriate responses to the day-to-day problems they faced. The commitment to the school vision, evident in almost everyone we interviewed, appeared to come both from the vision's immediate relevance and from the fact that they themselves had developed it.

The Politics of the Vision

In only one school did the 2020 process actually start with a pre-existing vision.

We developed a vision two years ago before we started. We did it right. We started with the vision first.

This was an exception; few schools began their change efforts with a fully articulated, explicit vision. Moreover, in most schools there was little interest in engaging in the kinds of discussions required to develop a mission statement out of ideas. However, the schools did not start from scratch. Several had participated in the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's "Onward to Excellence" (OTE) program, which stresses data-based self-assessment and the setting of explicit goals (Blum and others 1987, Blum and Butler 1985). This self-analysis helped many schools move more directly to the vision statements that came out of the 2020 program. For example:

It (the vision) comes right out of the 2020 process. In the restructuring group, the process is now on leading the staff through visioning—academic attitudes, social behaviors (linked to OTE), and expressing their vision of student outcomes.

More important, vision sprang from both activity and discussion. Principals and teachers in the 2020 schools felt themselves moving, creating a new reality based on new authority structures and redefining the functions of schools (Goldman and others 1991). Vision development was in no way separate from the other activities and drew energy from those activities rather than the other way around. In one elementary school, it took three years of working on restructuring activities before they were ready to work on an actual vision statement. It took one evening:

The mission statement was exciting. We all had the same basic values and the task was putting them in a coherent and short statement that we could share.... For vision building we got together to make our mission statement—it was an all-staff retreat with dinner.

And like those of us who spoke "prose" long before we'd learned the meaning of

that intimidating word, many of these schools "had vision" long before they realized it. For instance,

If there was a common vision, it would be that we are a family and that we are working together to help students. I've wondered if vision should be the next step, but so far I haven't focused on it because when things really start happening around here is when we focus on what is good for kids. When we start talking about dreams or nightmares, people tend to pull away and don't want to think about how that is going to affect them.

This last comment alludes to the dangers of vision development. Vision has the potential to crystallize, define, and legitimize far reaching changes. Some of this may be irrevocable and commit the organization to an uncharted future. Moreover, in these schools not everyone is enthusiastic about the direction of change or about the change process itself. The vision process connotes a sense of risk.

A vision for the future is a hard thing, and so is figuring out what restructuring goes along with that new vision.

Real concern that sometimes the vision process can be destructive. The way you go about in the beginning of the vision process can have far reaching ramifications.

We interviewed change advocates, activists who supported and, in some cases, initiated vision development and the change process in which their schools had embarked. For most of them the visions described above validated their previous, sometimes longstanding, educational philosophies. For example:

That was my philosophy anyway to have a caring, supportive environment. That's how I feel and, as a counselor, I'm with students all the time... I already bought into it anyway, so I was glad that everybody could have ownership.

I've had this belief all along that we need to be closer to the kids, but it's given me a way to express it to the staff.

It's reinforced all the things I believed in and wanted to do ... along. Given me new energy.

A few teachers were more specific:

It supported my own vision of what I want to do in special education. It's given me more opportunities to be able to get out there, be with regular teachers, and share the vision of what I want to do in my setting.

The vision statement created an atmosphere of legitimacy for a more flexible, more consciously student-oriented approach to curriculum. One suspects, however, that more traditionally oriented faculty felt less involved in the vision statement and the vision development process, and they may have been alienated by both. A few teachers alluded to this:

The people who didn't see themselves going in that general direction left.

(Sigh) That (the quality of relationships between the staff) may be our nemesis. Personally, I have developed some very good positive new relationships because of the change process position. Some relationships I felt positively about beforehand have sort of been fractured because of me being part of the change process has created conflict. A lot of the teachers who have been satisfied with the status quo didn't want to change—didn't want to put the energy into change would be more accurate. Saw that as a threat—someone wanting to forcefully encourage them to change.

The vision development process may have had a political dimension that did not really emerge in our interviews. We turn now to how respondents describe that process.

After the Vision: Behavior at the School

The teachers and principals we interviewed internalized and applied their school's vision. Most reported that the vision, or at least how they interpreted it, affected their relationships with colleagues and students, their performance in the classroom, and even the way they thought about the educational process. For teachers especially, it provided cover for their desire or willingness to make changes in their teaching and to experiment.

One part of it has really influenced me—the "we are exploratory in nature"—has caused me to rethink my teaching and experiment more.

The biggest thing is trying things I haven't tried before.

At least one teacher, moreover, hinted that he was influenced not only by the vision itself, but by the collaborative process that developed the vision.

I certainly have become more involved in collaborative activities than before—and there has been a very direct positive impact on my teaching. I now try more collaborative problem solving in my science classes and it has really invigorated my teaching.

To the extent that the above comment reflects a common reality in this and other 2020 schools, it suggests that there is a mutually reinforcing circle of the vision itself, collaboration in discussing it, and collaborative, innovative activities that both spawned the vision and provide a context in which it can be applied. The vision may create its own mystique, and staff may attribute far-reaching consequences to it, as this statement shows:

I've had less students come up crying this year from teachers that have said things to them, that have hurt their feelings. So I'm hoping. I don't know it's because of the vision statement.

There's a difference in what teachers have done.

Principals also reported that they had been guided by the vision and that it contributed to their own professional development as leaders. First, it helped them collaborate and got them more involved in instructional activities.

I work a lot with the grade level teams. I didn't do that before. I think it works really well and I learn a lot about how leadership can operate at this level.

Second, the vision became a screen for their own administrative decision-making.

It helped me because I could share the vision statement in interviews and ask applicants how they would fit it.

It's helped the principal clarify his decision making process. We [the administrative team] really use goals to make decisions about resource allocation. We make better decisions much more quickly.

Because teachers embraced the vision, decisions based on the vision acquired a legitimacy they might not otherwise have had. The common acceptance of a vision also allowed principals *and* teachers to feel more comfortable with the 2020 program's delegation of decision-making authority to committees headed, and controlled, by teachers. The sense of common mission, in combination with the openness of the decision-making process and the frequency of discussion, generated a great deal of collegial trust that ran both vertically and horizontally.

Our school vision is "every student can succeed" and I think that all of the committees and leaders use that as a "test filter" for every decision and discussion. You hear the phrase throughout committee meetings and in hallway conversations. We wrote that mission statement two years ago at a whole staff end-of-year retreat. We review it each year and departments work on how to apply it in their specific situations.

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Yeah it's shared. "Every student can succeed" is our vision. We all try to think about what does that mean for each problem that we are working on. I think that the staff take it very seriously.

The interviews conducted for this study, along with informal discussions with interviewees and visits to the sites at other times, indicated that vision influenced many of the decisions made by teachers in their classrooms and in their interactions with colleagues, as well as the decisions made by administrators, particularly around the allocation of resources.

The Process of Vision-Building

The data in the previous section suggest that vision-building can be a bottom-up process. This is a departure from much of the literature on strategic planning, which has an emphasis on a key leader developing a vision or mission to drive the organization. This literature assumes that a vision is something developed at the highest levels of the organization by a small group of individuals or by a single visionary leader capable of having a perspective broad enough to chart the course for the organization. Theoretically, the vision would then flow from the top of the organization down the structure, to guide the behavior and determine the goals for everyone else in the organization.

This top-down model has, in fact, been the operative strategy throughout the private sector, and it has worked quite well in many settings. One of the questions posed in this article is the degree to which the private-sector approach to vision-building is appropriate for public schools. Our data and experiences suggest, however, that bottom-up vision-building is more appropriate, and potentially more successful, for schools in certain situations and under certain circumstances. There are four reasons for this belief:

First, the nature of the organization of schools and supervision of work in schools is such that teachers have wide latitude in the choices they make in how and, to a large degree, what they choose to teach. They will not be responsive to directive visions any more than they have been to other top-down reforms.

Second, the practicality ethic present in schools creates a strong need for teachers to see the effects of decisions in immediate, practical terms (Doyle and Ponder 1977-78). If they are developing a vision, they are able to do this; when they receive a vision from "on high," they are not able to do so. When they cannot see the immediate practical implications of a policy, teachers are more inclined to reject it.

Third, the pace of change and diversity of educational settings is such that vision-building needs to be an iterative process. Ideas may need to be modified in response to parental concerns, or as a result of practical considerations. If the vision is presented on an all-or-nothing basis, or as a static concept, it cannot be adapted to the unique work settings and challenges of each school.

And finally, the process of developing the vision itself may be as valuable as or more valuable than the specific language that emerges. The collegiality and collaboration that are integral to vision-building help teachers reassess their values and implicit assumptions about teaching and learning and their role in the organization. Vision-building, when done properly, requires the examination of large quantities of information by teachers, which has the effect of expanding their horizon and perspective on their role in the organization (Goldman and others 1991).

Prerequisites to Vision-Building

Vision-building in public schools is not easy. It requires time, which is often in short supply. It is frequently greeted with cynicism, since it has the appearance of

being the latest educational fad. It requires a great deal of preparation and work to be done correctly, since considerable information about the school and trends in education and society generally must be gathered and analyzed. And it can be very threatening, particularly if the vision that develops ends up favoring certain programs or individuals over others.

In the paragraphs that follow, we offer some general observations regarding prerequisites to successful vision-building. They are based in part on the results of the interview data, in part on literature on this and related topics, and in part on a previous, conceptually different interpretation of the larger data set from which the data for this article were drawn (Goldman and others 1991). These observations should be considered tentative and exploratory. We have identified the following six prerequisites:

1. *A previous history of systematic school improvement efforts.* Such a history seems to provide important conditions that encourage the "leap of faith" involved with undertaking vision-building. Staff have a stronger sense of personal efficacy, which leads them to believe they can influence the conditions of work and the organizational culture of their school site.

Previous experience with school improvement also allows for the creation of leadership, particularly teacher leadership, and for more opportunities for teachers to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to conduct or participate in processes that require multiple human interactions, each with the potential for conflict.

The model or type of school improvement undertaken previously does not seem to be of critical importance. In fact, some sites had been involved in a variety of strategies over the past ten years. Most previous attempts at systematic improvement were regarded to have been at least partially successful.

2 *A willingness to examine data in various forms and employ them in the*

decision-making process. Data can take many forms, including:

- information about current practices at the school and the efficacy of those practices, such as attendance data; test results; parent, teacher, or student surveys; or observation of classroom practices
- journals and periodicals offering a perspective on current thinking and innovative practices in education and on societal trends
- visits to other school sites, or work sites, to learn firsthand about new techniques

All this information feeds into the vision-building process to help overcome the tendency of educators to make decisions based on anecdotal or impressionistic information offered up by self-proclaimed faculty "experts." In addition to gathering this information, faculties had to commit to employing it as a frame of reference when determining vision and mission, or when setting goals.

3. The presence of a principal who is willing to share power and decision-making to some degree. An important distinction needs to be made here between schools with "heroic" leaders, who develop the vision personally and "sell" it through a variety of strategies, and those who simply create the conditions whereby others may develop the vision. It appears that both of these methods can provide the conditions necessary for a collective vision to be developed and embraced; however, in the case of the "heroic" principal, it still appears to be necessary for the principal to release ownership and allow the vision to become the staff's for it to take hold successfully. This sharing of ownership may involve changes from what the principal envisioned initially, and it may entail the use of a process different from that which the principal viewed as ideal. The willingness of principals to step aside to some degree seems to be an important ingredient for successful vision-building in all cases.

4. A commitment to act upon the results of the vision-building process. Many schools today have been involved in vision-building activities in part as a result of the popularity of strategic planning. In many cases these visions have been developed in a vacuum; no one is certain why they are being created, or for what purpose. Often these visions or missions can be seen adorning school hallways, stationery, and business cards, while having little impact on school decisions or operations.

Vision-building processes that are successful already have a clear role in the school's operation guaranteed for them. That is, the means for implementing the vision are specified in advance. Sometimes this is accomplished by mandate, as in the case of Oregon's 2020 schools, which were required to develop grant applications that, while not requiring a vision, certainly made having one desirable. In other cases putting the vision to practice is an extension of the school's traditions of clarity of purpose and direction. In either event, a c: arly identified role for the mission before the process begins can be an important prerequisite to the success of the process.

5. A central office that is, at least, willing to keep out of the process, and, at best, willing to support it actively. In the schools we have examined, and in our reading of the literature, it seems that the central office appears to participants in vision-building more as a hindrance than anything else. While this clearly reflects the ambiguous power (and personal) relationships that often exist between individual school sites and central administrative offices, it also suggests that the most important role central offices can play is to make it clear that schools can proceed with the process without fear of reprisal.

Some behaviors that help accomplish this supportive environment are as follows:

- provision of general districtwide vision, mission, and goals that provide a framework within which the school may develop its own interpretations, adaptations, and variations that are site-specific and appropriate
- provision of data not readily available to the sites that can help build the database upon which decisions about vision can be made
- provision of process assistance, in those relatively rare instances where central administration is perceived as a source of help, and where there are people within central administration who have the technical skills necessary to facilitate such a process

6. An awareness of the natural tension between top-down and bottom-up planning strategies. Strategic planning in education has gained in popularity greatly during the past six years. It has been adapted from the private sector to the educational context primarily by increasing the amount of participation and the openness of the process. Even in its modified form, it still emphasizes mission-setting and vision-building by a small team at the district level as the first step in the process. Is there an inherent conflict between centrally created visions and missions and those created at individual school sites?

In our study, none of the schools was operating in a district that had a strategic plan that served as a referent point for decision-making. Therefore, these schools did not have to confront this issue. It is interesting to conjecture what would occur if a strategic planning process were to be introduced at the district level. How would these schools react to a mission and vision being imposed upon them now that they had developed their own?

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Perhaps it would make sense in some districts for all schools to begin by making a first pass at developing a vision before such work were initiated at the district level. The results of such a process at the site level might help inform district-level deliberations and create greater ownership of the vision and mission that developed.

More common has been the practice of developing the district mission and vision, then mandating that each school examine its practices in relation to the district direction and develop its own interpretation or version of the district's document. The relative effectiveness of these two possible strategies for integrating strategic planning and site-level vision-building bears further investigation.

Conclusions

This study was designed to be exploratory in nature and therefore so are its conclusions. They are designed to inform the discussion of this important, yet elusive, concept. In that light, we offer the following tentative conclusions regarding the role of vision in the process of school restructuring:

First, vision can be an effective tool in reshaping school culture and practices, particularly if certain prerequisites are present.

Second, vision may reside initially in an individual or group of individuals, but must eventually be embraced at varying levels by the entire staff. There must be the opportunity for the vision to be shaped and adapted by the staff for personal ownership to develop.

Third, to be effective, a school vision must be challenging yet attainable. Staff must perceive the vision as possible, and at the same time understand that they will be stretched, perhaps to their limit, to achieve it.

Fourth, even if a vision is not necessarily shared widely initially, it provides an important motivator and rallying cry for staff who are more committed to examin-

ing current practice and reshaping the school's direction. These "early innovators" need this sort of symbolic validation to take risks and to model the behaviors that show others what the vision looks like and how it can serve to reshape current practices.

Fifth, vision may be an important step along the road to power sharing, or empowerment at the site level. It provides a decision-making context that allows the focus of the participatory decision-making process to be moved off of adult working conditions and on to conditions of student learning.

Sixth, the role of vision in shaping organizational purpose and individual effort within the organization is particularly important in schools, especially if one accepts Weick's (1976) notion of the school district and school site as loosely coupled systems. There needs to be some sort of "glue" in times of rapid change that can hold together these systems and allow them to adapt to changing societal expectations and values.

And finally, vision is not an easy topic to study. It presents difficult problems of definition, operationalization, observation, measurement, and analysis. It can have an almost quasi-religious aura about it. In part due to these factors, it has not been studied systematically to the best of our knowledge, particularly in the educational context. At the same time, its demonstrated and potential ability to bring about organizational alignment and goal focus in schools, as reported by researchers (Miles and Seashore Lewis 1990) and educators (Herman 1989), suggests an importance that demands further serious investigation.

We freely admit the limitations of our study and its findings, but nevertheless suggest that vision may be a critical component in any process of fundamental school change and restructuring. Its ability to get staffs "unstuck" and to empower those willing to change can provide just the impetus that schools need to make the transition from passive implementors of

externally developed policy to creators of meaning and purpose.

If, in fact, educational governance is evolving toward models in which schools will be responsible for meeting certain outcomes, and be given wide latitude in terms of how they meet those outcomes, the ability to align energy and efforts to achieve the desired outcomes will become increasingly important. If the school choice movement continues to gain momentum and eventually spawns various policies that cause schools to compete in some way, this concept of vision and mission will become even more important.

The study reported in these pages provides some preliminary glimpses of the ways in which vision is being developed and used in schools that are concerned with change. We hope this paper stimulates the conversation and investigation of this concept and its potential as an element in the process of school restructuring.

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