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## ABSTRACT

Findings from a study that examined the perceptions of different educational stakeholders about the context of schools and educational change are presented in this paper, which views educational change from within a transformational framework. The focus is not only on goals, but also on the beliefs and expectations of the stakeholders in the educational system and surrounding community. Education 2000, an initiative of the American Forum for Global Education calls for educational re-design grounded in global education. It is a national project that establishes structured linkages between school districts and their communities, and holds the belief that the design of an educational system must be owned by local, multiple stakeholders. Three such projects are: Redwood Falls, Minnesota; Tinley Park, Illinois, and Yonkers, New York. This paper studies the Minnesota and New York data. Surveys mailed in Yonkers are returned by 771 professional staff and 417 parents, yielding respective response rates of 47 and 15 percent. In Redwood Falls, 226 out of 800 community members responded, a 28 percent response rate, and 72 staff members completed the survey, an 80 percent response rate. Similar numbers of parents and community members favored change or were satisfied with their schools, and different educational staff held different role perceptions. If commitment to school restructuring is based on the beliefs of a critical mass of stakeholders, an issue to be addressed is that of defining what constitutes a critical mass. The data supports a systemic, ongoing revision of roles and perceptions of different educational stakeholders. Four tables are included. (7 references) (LMI)

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## PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING THE WORLD, SCHOOLS, AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

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*"...education and society must consciously forge a co-evolutionary relationship that influences and shapes both. But at times, evolutionary imbalances exist between education and society. Such is the case today."*

*Bela Banathy*

In the past few years there has been a shift in how we think of and study change in educational organizations. In the 1970's and early 1980's innovations in schools were studied in the context of "planned educational change" (Berman and McLaughlin 1980; Fullan 1982; McLaughlin 1987). This view of educational change assumed that schools' administration and staff could plan and undertake change in a rational and programmed fashion. The study of schools and personnel following this framework of educational change revealed some changes in the use of instructional materials and approaches, and/or in the reallocation of existing roles or resources. It did not, however, reveal fundamental changes in the way schools define themselves or operate as organizational entities. An example of the changes that have taken place in the past decade is that, since 1983, 20% of school districts in the United States have changed to some form of re-structure in governance (Winter, 1990). However, as with other educational innovations and fads, there is little evidence to date that these changes in governance have in turn transformed the structure and operations of schools.

Increasingly, an alternative perspective of change in schools has emerged, this being one where change is seen as transformational and systemic. This perspective focuses not only on the actual innovations being sought, but on the beliefs, values, perceptions, expectations, and relationships of actors and stakeholders in the educational system and its surrounding community (Basom and Crandall 1991; Banathy 1991; Rallis and Phlegar 1990). Within this perspective, adaptive change is "less rational and predictable than that produced through planned change, because instead of being defined by policy-makers and administrators, and then imposed on practitioners, the change grows from the organization's members themselves" (Rallis and Phlegar 1990). Moreover, programs tend to have multiple and often ambiguous goals and the change resulting from a particular program or intervention depends not only upon the program outputs but also on the conditions peculiar to each individual environment.

An essential component of systems re-design in education involves the development of a vision of the new educational system. This vision emerges out of efforts on the part of educational stakeholders (including community members) to share their needs and beliefs regarding the current educational system, and their goals or even wishes for a new system. To develop this vision, these educational stakeholders, community players, and parents need to be involved in shared conversations so that a new relationship between learners and the larger social community can be created (Basom and Crandall, 1991). This vision leads to changes in decision making and to the incorporation of new stakeholders into the educational design agenda. To maximize decision-making concerning the design of an educational system three different kinds

of information are required, these being knowledge from research and development, practice wisdom, and stakeholder's perspectives (Basom and Crandall 1991).

The data reported in this paper is consistent with a research and documentation framework suited to a transformational view of educational change. It is also designed to provide educational stakeholders with access to relevant information about the community and educational context of the schools which are to be re-designed. Therefore, instead of only focusing on the inputs and outputs of the interventions and processes leading to change, as one would within a planned educational framework, it focuses primarily on the context of schools and on the participants and stakeholders.

### **Rationale for examining different perceptions of education**

Numerous studies examining the possibilities of restructuring and re-designing education systems have identified barriers or sources of resistance to change. In a recent study of perceived barriers to shared decision-making, Mutchler and Duttweiler (1990) identified a number of interpersonal and institutional barriers. Among the interpersonal barriers they identified were: (1) resistance to changing roles and responsibilities stemming from reluctance to assume new responsibilities, apathy, satisfaction with the status quo, or dependence on norms and role expectations; (2) fear of losing power; (3) lack of skills for moving from individual decision-making to collective decision-making; and (4) lack of trust. The institutional barriers identified by Mutchler and Duttweiler included: (1) lack of definition and clarity of all relevant aspects of decision-making; (2) inadequate or inappropriate resources (i.e., time, money, staff); and (3) lack of hierarchical support.

While the preceding study is useful in identifying potential barriers to educational changes, it is illustrative of many of the studies on educational change conducted within a planned educational change framework, and, as such, has an important limitation. Specifically, it is limited in that the barriers identified only include a limited number of stakeholders, in this case, principals and superintendents. Furthermore, it examined the beliefs and attitudes of these stakeholders without linking these beliefs and attitudes to other stakeholders' perceptions and beliefs. Within a transformational and ecological view of educational organizations and school change, one cannot study one aspect of schools independent of other aspects. In the design of educational systems, it is important to document the views and beliefs of multiple stakeholders for at least two reasons. First, each individual's beliefs and perceptions need to be acknowledged. Second, we need to examine the impact and relationship in the views held by different people involved in or impacted by change processes.

In his study of educational system design, Salisbury (1990) identified several strategies which could increase the probabilities of success of schools and districts engaged in systemic re-design. Two of these strategies are formation of a grassroots collaboration network and concerns management. The data reported in this paper seeks

to maximize the use of these strategies. In this way, the documentation and research agenda which this data supports, is not only designed to capture and explain the lessons learned from the implementation of a design process, but is also an intrinsic component of the project itself.

### Context for this study:

This paper is based on different components of a comprehensive research and documentation agenda for EDUCATION 2000. Education 2000 is an initiative of The American Forum for Global Education that consists in a systemic and system-wide educational re-design initiative which is grounded in global education. EDUCATION 2000 is a national project which establishes structured linkages between school districts and their ensuing communities. These linkages are created around a three-phased process which begins with the questions: *"What will be the needs of students in the 21st century?"*, and *"How should we design our schools to meet the needs of students in the 21st century?"* EDUCATION 2000 is grounded in the belief that the design of an educational system must be owned locally, and by multiple stakeholders.

EDUCATION 2000 is implemented in three phases. Emerging from PHASES 1 and 2, are a series of documents which define the parameters and content of a new educational system. One of these documents is a statement articulating the mission and goals for all educational programs developed. This mission statement is developed with input by the community and professional staff. It is further defined by a number of educational goals and student outcomes which are at the core of a curriculum blueprint. The blueprint itself serves as the principal guide for program assessment, curriculum planning, and staff development<sup>1</sup>.

Currently, EDUCATION 2000 has established projects in Redwood Falls, Minnesota, Yonkers, New York, and Tinley Park, Illinois. Redwood Falls is in its fourth year of the project, Yonkers in its third year, and Tinley Park in its first year. This study includes data from Yonkers and Redwood Falls only and is part of an ongoing effort to document the community context and educational settings in which each of the EDUCATION 2000 projects is immersed. Specifically, this study describes the perceptions and attitudes of different stakeholders (i.e., parents and professional staff) regarding the degree to which their community is impacted by world events; the extent to which schools are addressing the needs of children; and the kinds of knowledge, skills

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<sup>1</sup> Willard Kniep's 1992 AERA paper titled "From Image to Implementation: Some Results of Education 2000" presents and analyzes different components of two of the curriculum blue-prints that have emerged out of EDUCATION 2000 projects. Additional information about EDUCATION 2000 can be found in Kniep, W. "Next Steps for Global Education". New York: The American Forum, 1987.



and sensitivities schools should impart to better serve the needs of students. It also explores the perceptions and attitudes of different professional staff (i.e., teachers, principals, and central office administration staff) regarding their role definition, their decision-making processes, and the climate for innovation and change in their schools.

## Method

In both Redwood Falls and in Yonkers there was significant parental, community, and professional staff's input in the elaboration of the mission statement and educational goals for students. This input was secured through the participation of these different groups of stakeholders in a series of community fora and mission statement workshops. To better assess the likelihood that the mission statement and statement of educational goals for students would be implemented and sustained, we decided to study the extent to which these documents were consonant with the views of the broader community and staff. We administered surveys to parents, community members, and professional staff on their opinions regarding the world and its impact on their community, and on expectations and opinions of schools. This data was collected in the second year of the EDUCATION 2000 projects in both Redwood Falls and Yonkers. The surveys given to community members and parents shared a number of questions with the professional staff survey. However, the latter measure was considerably longer and covered aspects such as decision-making, communication structures, and the history and climate for innovations within the school district.

The items that were common to both surveys included questions on respondents' opinions and perceptions of the impact of world events and trends, and on the perceived difference between the world of today and the world of the future. They also sought information on respondents' perceptions on the changing nature of the world, and on the extent to which schools are addressing the needs of students. All of the preceding items were closed and used a nine-point Likert scale, where 1 was the lowest value and 9 the highest. An additional cluster of open-ended items asked respondents to identify the kinds of knowledge, skills, and sensitivities schools should teach, and the problems preventing them from providing an adequate education for children.

To illustrate the differences and similarities in the perceptions of parents and professional staff regarding the world, its impact on schools, and the extent to which schools need to change to better address the needs of students I have used data from both Redwood Falls and Yonkers. To illustrate the different perceptions that different professional staff have about the climate for change and innovation in their schools and

about their role definition and that of different staff within their school district, I have only used data from Yonkers<sup>2</sup>

## Sample

Redwood Falls and Yonkers are significantly different communities. Redwood Falls is a predominantly agricultural community located in the southern part of Minnesota. It has approximately 5300 inhabitants, the majority of which are Caucasian of German ancestry. There is a small Asian population and an equally small African-American population. The schools in Redwood Falls have approximately 1400 students and employ 90 teachers. Yonkers, on the other hand, is a large urban community located just north of New York City. It's diverse multicultural population is artificially clustered around four different city quadrants. Yonkers School District has approximately 20,000 students and employs about 1900 professional staff.

In Yonkers, the staff survey was administered to 771 professional staff, representing a 47% return rate. The survey was administered during faculty meetings to teachers, building administrative staff, and central office administrative staff. In Redwood Falls, the staff survey was mailed to all professional staff members. Of these, 72 surveys were completed, representing 80% of the population.

To gather data on the parental community in Yonkers, a Spanish and English version of the community survey was mailed to parents of all students in seven of the thirty-two schools in the school district. The schools included five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Altogether, these seven schools captured the diversity in schools and populations found in the Yonkers community. In all, 417 surveys were completed and returned, representing a return rate of slightly over 15% of the potential responses.

While the closed items were analyzed for the entire staff survey sample, only a sub-set of the open-ended items was analyzed for the Yonkers data. This subset included data from 180 elementary teachers, 80 middle school teachers, 80 high school teachers, and 10 administrative staff members. Regarding the open-ended items on the parental survey, a random sample of the completed surveys was analyzed. This sample included

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<sup>2</sup> The Redwood Falls data on staff perceptions regarding their role definitions and decision-making processes was collected through interviews of a very small group of professional staff members, and is not entirely comparable to the data collected in Yonkers. For a more comprehensive review of the data from Yonkers and in Redwood Falls, consult EDUCATION 2000 research reports available at The American Forum for Global Education.

57 surveys from parents with children in elementary schools, 10 from parents with children in the middle schools, and 13 from parents of high school students.

In Redwood Falls, the community survey was mailed to 800 community members. Of these, 226 were returned, representing a return rate of 28.3%. While the closed items from the entire sample were analyzed, only a sample of 44 surveys selected at random was used in the analysis of the open-ended data. Regarding the staff survey, all the completed surveys were analyzed.

## Results

### Parental/community and staff perceptions: Yonkers

There was much agreement among parents and professional staff regarding the extent to which the community is impacted by economic, political, and environmental events, with most respondents perceiving these events to have a moderate to high impact upon their community (see TABLE 1). In these three items, the ratings of teachers and parents were lower than those of principals and central office administration.

With some slight variations, there was a high level of agreement among all the respondents to the survey on the importance of preparing students for living in a multicultural society and on the likelihood that the world in which our children will be living will be different from the world of today. When respondents were asked to indicate where they thought that change would occur, more than 80% of the respondents stated that it would most likely occur in the environment and in the technological systems. Slightly fewer respondents stated that change would occur in the social and economic systems. Finally, 53% of the respondents stated that change would occur in the political system while 65% of the respondents stated it would occur in the cultural system. TABLE 2 summarizes this data.

Staff and parents differed markedly in their responses to the item: *"Schools are preparing students adequately to live in a changing world"*. Staff survey respondents were divided in terms of their agreement with this item. About 30.2% of the staff responses and 10% of the parent responses were in strong disagreement with this statement. On the other hand, 16.7% of the staff responses and 9% of the parent responses were in strong agreement. Slightly more than half of the staff responses and more than two thirds of the parent responses falling within the mid-points of the scale.

There was a statistically significant difference between teachers and central office administrators, and between principals and central office administrators. Central office staff ranked this item lower than either teachers and principals, with principals rating this item highest. Overall, central office staff appeared to feel least satisfied with the way schools are preparing children.



The comparison between the ratings of different groups of teachers indicated that elementary teachers rated this item significantly higher (mean 4.8) than middle school (mean 4.5) and high school teachers (mean 4.5). These results suggest that elementary teachers appear to be slightly more satisfied with the way schools are preparing students than are middle school or secondary school teachers. The mean for parents' responses to this item was 5.0, with about 10% of the parents strongly disagreeing with this statement, and another 10% strongly agreeing with it. In general, more people appear to be dissatisfied with the way schools are preparing students than are satisfied, although many respondents, especially parents, are unsure about the adequacy of schools.

We also asked respondents to identify the knowledge and skills schools should impart to better address the needs of students. There were more similarities than differences in the comments made by parents and staff. All respondents mentioned the need for schools to provide basic knowledge and skills. However, while parents tended to cluster basic knowledge and skills, many of the staff referred to the need to reorganize the curriculum in different ways rather than to simply teach more reading, writing, and mathematics. On the other hand, more parents than staff called for the need to provide knowledge that is relevant to students and that would help them make sense of the world in which they live.

Similarly, while all respondents mentioned the need for schools to teach students respect and sensitivity for individuals and cultures, parents also emphasized the need for teachers to demonstrate more respect for students, as well as the need for teachers and other school staff to provide more individualized attention to students.

There were some differences between parents and staff in terms of the problems that prevent schools from preparing students for a changing world. While all respondents identified the problem of poor home and living conditions, lack of funding for education, and lack of community/parental support, a smaller number of parents identified lack of parental support as a problem while a greater number of parents identified poor home and living conditions as a significant problem. Only central administrative staff and parents identified staff inadequacy as a problem. On the other hand, only secondary teachers and parents identified misdirected political priorities within the school and in the community as a significant problem impacting the schools; and only central office administration identified resistance to change as a problem.

#### Parental/community and staff perceptions: Redwood Falls

There was much agreement among all respondents that Redwood Falls is impacted by economic, political, and environmental events. A similar percentage of professional staff and community members (15%) strongly disagreed with the statement that the schools are preparing students adequately to live in a changing world. However,

a greater percentage of staff members (43%) than parents (31%) agreed strongly with that statement. The overall mean for community members was 5.4 while the mean for staff was 6.1).

Both sets of respondents agreed strongly with the statement concerning the need for students to know more about the cultures and values of different people, with the mean for community members being 7.3 and for staff 7.9.

In terms of the kinds of knowledge that schools should be teaching to prepare students adequately, many of the comments of staff and community members indicated that schools should teach more knowledge about specific disciplines. However, many more staff than community members suggested the need for teaching non-traditional and integrated curricula, while more community members than staff suggested the need for more discipline-based knowledge.

The majority of the skills that both community members and staff identified as important referred to computer, critical thinking, communication, and applied (occupational) skills. In terms of sensitivities, about a third of both the staff and community members responses referred to the need to teach students to be sensitive to other cultures. A comparable number of respondents in both groups called for the need for students to be sensitive to other individuals.

In Redwood Falls, community members and staff members identified the following problems as significant in terms of preventing schools from adequately preparing students to live in a changing world: community conservatism, lack of funds, general resistance to change, and geographic isolation. Community members also referred to inadequate staff and teaching methods, to parochialism, and to misdirected priorities among school officials and politicians. Staff members identified time constraints on teaching and geographic isolation as significant problems. Overall, staff members emphasized problems outside of the school system while community members emphasized problems that were inherent to the school system. Moreover, the prevalence of problems that are inherent to the educational system is different for both samples, with more community members perceiving teachers to be one of the main problems facing the schools and few staff members perceiving this to be the case.

#### *Contrast between the two communities*

Possibly the most striking finding when comparing groups of respondents across two communities as different as Yonkers, New York and Redwood Falls, Minnesota, is the apparent similarity in the perceptions and opinions held by different groups regarding the world and the schools. There are many more similarities than there are differences when comparing staff and community members across the two communities.

Moreover, the few differences that emerged in terms of respondents' perceptions are differences in emphasis rather than substance. For example, parents and staff members in Yonkers appeared to be less satisfied than their counterparts in Redwood Falls with the adequacy of schools for preparing students to live in a changing world. This similarity in perceptions is interesting given the low return rate in the Yonkers' staff and parental surveys.

Our data suggests that a small group of educational stakeholders in both communities, including parents, community members, teachers, and administrative staff, think that schools are not adequately preparing students to live in a changing world. However, at least as many of these stakeholders think that schools are doing well in preparing students, and an even larger group is undecided about this issue.

In their identification of the kinds of knowledge, skills and sensitivities that schools should impart to better serve the needs of students in a changing world, there were important differences among the different groups in both communities. In both Yonkers and Redwood Falls, parents and community members called for more basic instruction. Professional staff, on the other hand, emphasized the need for a re-examination and re-organization of curricula. Moreover, while the need to encourage respect and sensitivity towards others was identified by all groups, parents and community members underscored the importance of teachers demonstrating such respect and sensitivity towards students themselves.

Another area in which there is significant variability, both within and across communities, relates to the question on the problems affecting the schools. In addition to the differences between staff and parents in the two communities, Yonkers parents and staff differed from Redwood Falls staff and community members in terms of their perceptions of the problems impacting their schools.

While misdirected political priorities, lack of funding, and to some extent, staff inadequacy was mentioned by all groups, Yonkers respondents identified poor home and living conditions and lack of parental support as significant problems, while Redwood Falls respondents identified community conservatism, parochialism, and geographic isolation, as significant problems.

The differences between the two communities regarding perceived problems impacting the schools reflect the local conditions in which the two school districts are immersed, one being a rural community, genuinely isolated from large urban centers, and the other being an urban school district, highly impacted by many of the problems that are common to inner cities.

### Differences in professional staff perceptions regarding their roles and decision-making processes: Yonkers

A number of items on the survey sought information on respondents' perceptions regarding the adequacy of communication and decision-making structures, and on the overall climate for innovation in the district. All but two of these items were closed and used a nine-point Likert scale in which respondents rated the extent to which they disagreed with a given statement (1 was extreme disagreement and 9 extreme agreement).

Overall, teachers and administrative staff were in moderately low agreement with the statement "*The communication flow among teachers is adequate.*" The mean rating for this item 4.6. Their rating for the statement "*The communication flow between teachers and administrators is adequate*" was very similar, namely 5.1 with middle school teachers giving significantly higher ratings (mean 5.7) than either elementary or high school teachers, and with high school teachers giving the lowest ratings of the three groups (mean 4.7).

Six other statements which were also rated using the nine-point scale sought information on the extent to which teachers are part of the decision-making processes in the district. TABLE 3 presents the different groups' ratings of various items on teachers' involvement in decision-making.

Teachers and principals had very different perceptions regarding the role of teachers in different types of decision-making processes. For instance, teachers and central office administrators did not perceive teachers as being part of decision-making processes regarding administrative, budget, and scheduling issues, while principals perceived teachers to have a significantly higher role in such decision-making processes.

While the ratings of all respondents regarding teachers' role in curriculum decisions and in the selection of instructional materials were higher than those for teachers' roles in administrative, scheduling, and budget issues, respondents from all groups, except for principals, perceived that teachers played only a moderate role in decision-making processes regarding curriculum issues

Of particular interest in all of the items related to teachers' involvement in decision-making is the degree of alignment between the ratings of teachers and central office administration. There is much less alignment between teachers and principals, with principals ascribing greater involvement in decision-making to teachers in all but one item, namely one referring to the involvement of teachers in discipline-related issues. The difference between the ratings of principals and those of other groups is noteworthy and difficult to explain without additional information on the meaning ascribed to the different items by different respondents.



Some of the differences among the various groups of teachers are also of interest, since middle school teachers gave significantly higher ratings than elementary and high school teachers in several of the items. This is counter-intuitive given the characterization by much research of middle school teachers as particularly alienated and uninvolved. The higher ratings by middle school teachers may be due to the increased attention Yonkers School District has recently paid to the middle schools, since the junior high schools were recently restructured in terms of the grades they include.

Several items on the survey sought information on past and current innovations and changes the district has implemented or is currently implementing. A couple of closed items gathered data on the overall climate for change and innovation in the district. These items used a nine-point Likert scale and took the form of the following statements: *"Teachers in this school district are willing to explore and inquire into their ways of teaching and learning"*, and *"The administration of this school district encourages teachers to experiment with new ideas and strategies"*. Respondents' ratings of these two items are presented in TABLE 4.

The ratings for the item related to the extent to which teachers are willing to explore and inquire into their ways of teaching and learning in the district were moderately high (mean 6.5), with elementary school teachers giving higher ratings than middle (mean 6.3) and high school teachers (mean 5.8). The differences between the ratings of teachers and principals, between teachers and central office administration, between elementary and high school teachers and between middle and high school teachers are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Similarly high ratings were obtained for an item on the extent to which the administration in the district encourages teachers to experiment with new ideas and strategies (mean 6.1). In this item, elementary and middle school teachers gave higher ratings (mean 6.3) than high school teachers (mean 5.8). The differences between the ratings of elementary and high school teachers and between middle and high school teachers are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Both of the preceding items indicate that in general, teachers, and to a lesser extent principals and central office administrative staff, perceive that teachers are willing to explore and innovate and that the district is open and supportive of teachers' experimenting with new ideas and strategies. However, teachers perceive themselves to be more willing to try out different innovations than principals and central office administrators perceive teachers to be. Furthermore, principals and central office administrators perceive the district to be more encouraging of teachers' use of new approaches and strategies, than teachers do.

In an open-ended item, respondents were asked to *"list the most important changes that the school district has tried to implement"*. Respondents in all groups mentioned the magnet programs as the mechanism used to achieve desegregation and integration, this

being the most important change implemented by the district. Beyond this response, there was little overlap in the changes mentioned by different groups. For example, in addition to the magnet programs, elementary teachers most frequently mentioned the following: programs for students with special needs (6.6%); reading and writing programs (6.6%); computers in the classroom (6.6%); special staff development programs (5.4%) and human relations (4.4%).

Middle school teachers mentioned most frequently the following: new educational approaches (7.5%); computer technology (6.2%); and shifting the 9th grade to high school (5%). High school teachers mentioned unified curriculum (5%); discipline code (5%); heterogeneous groupings (5%); and shifting 9th grade to the high school (3.7%). Administrative staff did not mention any major change other than the magnet program and the desegregation efforts.

When asked to ascertain the success of such changes, respondents from the various groups offered different perspectives. More than half of the elementary teachers stated that desegregation/integration efforts had been successful, while 40% of the middle school teachers, 10% of the high school teachers, and 30% of the administrative staff perceived such success.

Respondents expressed very different opinions regarding other changes implemented by the district in the past.

"In theory, changes were necessary and valid. In practice, they were difficult to implement due to escalating problems within the district..."

"Yonkers has not been very successful. Yonkers has what I call a two-year plan (programs come in and out in two years.)"

"In my opinion, the district has held on to those changes that worked successfully and discarded those that did not."

The different responses made by teachers in different grade levels and by administrative staff, suggest that, except for the implementation of the desegregation plan through magnet schools, there is no consensus among the different groups of respondents about any other major changes or innovations implemented by the district in the past.

In terms of innovations and changes that the district is currently implementing, all respondents referred to the continued expansion of magnets as an innovation. In addition to magnet programs, other changes mentioned most frequently by elementary teachers included: discipline and self-motivation programs (5%); reduction of class size in the primary grades (3.8%); math and reading programs (3.8%), and whole language programs (3.3%).

Middle school teachers' responses included: EDUCATION 2000 (6.2%); discipline code (5%); early study programs (3.7%); and honors program (3.75%). High school teachers' responses included new curricula (12.5%); heterogeneous groupings (8.7%); and discipline code (6.2%). The responses of administrative staff included new district education and instruction plans (40%); new curricula (30%); and effective schools (30%). It is noteworthy that only 1.7% of the elementary teachers, 3.7% of the middle and high school teachers, and none of the administrative staff mentioned EDUCATION 2000 as a major change or innovation.

Regarding the potential for success of current changes and innovations, because the question was raised in a way that respondents could not match a success rating to a specific innovation, it is difficult to determine what their ratings apply to. However, the comments made by respondents reflected a wide range of views, even though underlying most of them was a call for continued commitment, flexibility and shared decision-making.

"This district seems to get on the bandwagon with every new program and does not always follow through..."

"Unless the district clarifies and prioritizes its goals, makes clear distinctions between goals, objectives, and strategies, and develops an unequivocal operational process, the likelihood is very remote that substantial change will be made or will endure."

"EDUCATION 2000 is likely to result in changes if the district maintains commitment and engages teachers rather than directs them."

"Any change has to be constantly monitored and a master plan cannot be set in stone."

"Without increased communication, awareness, and cooperation from the home and the community, it is unlikely that the schools will be very effective - the parents must play a strong role."

The analysis of statements given by the different groups of respondents regarding current changes implemented by the district, indicates that there is no shared vision among teachers in different grade levels regarding current district-wide innovation. Even though the sample size for administrative staff is small, there appears to be more consensus among this group than there is among different groups of teachers, about current innovations and changes. However, this consensus has not yet been transmitted to teaching staff.

Altogether, the data on decision and innovations reported in this paper indicates that there are important differences in the perceptions and role-definition of different

educational stakeholders. Some of these differences may be a function of the different items themselves (i.e., "using different ways of teaching and learning" may or may not be seen as an innovation). Nonetheless, some of these differences seem to lie more in real differences in how each of these stakeholders defines their role and that of others.

### *Concluding remarks*

While the small return rate in two of the surveys we used may indicate that the findings reported in this paper may not be representative of the communities from which they were obtained, this being particularly true for Yonkers, the degree of comparability in the data from Yonkers and Redwood Falls is noteworthy. We can conclude from this data that not all people think schools ought to change to meet the needs of students in a changing world. There are as many people who think schools should change as are people who think schools are doing a fine job addressing the needs of students. This is true for both parents and community members. Thus, if a commitment to engage in systemic school redesign is based on the beliefs and perceptions of a critical mass of educational stakeholders, a question which ought to be addressed is "*What constitutes a critical mass in terms of parents, community members, and professional staff?*" In fact, the issue of a critical mass is relevant to almost all aspects of the studies we conducted, and is especially important as one examines the differences in the role definition of different educational staff.

In analyzing the data from Yonkers on staff's perceptions of educational innovations in the district, I was particularly intrigued with the fact that professional staff working in different kinds of schools and at the district level, had such different perceptions of the past and current district and school innovations. For the most part, even though EDUCATION 2000 was in its second year of development in the district<sup>3</sup>, few people identified EDUCATION 2000 as a district-wide innovation. Moreover, except for the existing district-wide desegregation and innovation efforts, most of the innovations identified were school-based rather than district-wide. On the other hand, teachers and district staff identified a large number of innovations and seemed to believe that the district, as a whole, encouraged innovation and change. The latter finding is positive and encouraging in terms of the viability of EDUCATION 2000, yet, when seen in the context of the lack of widespread awareness of EDUCATION 2000 as a district-wide innovation, it is also puzzling.

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<sup>3</sup> The mission statement and educational goals developed within the Yonkers EDUCATION 2000 project were sent to every professional staff prior to the administration of the staff survey.



School reform, re-design, or restructuring efforts which are based at least in part on the rearrangement and reallocation of the roles of teachers and administrators, is a necessary condition of educational reform. This requires a systemic revision in the roles, relationship, distribution of authority, and allocation of resources in the organizational structure; new job descriptions with clear performance measures; and a new culture that encourages sharing in decision-making (Mutchler and Duttweiler, 1990; Winter, 1990).

Our data supports such a systemic and ongoing revision of the roles and perceptions of different educational stakeholders. The differences in the kinds of knowledge and skills schools should address, and in the kinds of problems affecting our schools identified by parents and community members on one hand, and teachers and administrative staff on the other, point to the need for aligning beliefs or for at least making these difference explicit in order to attain a shared understanding of what our schools need and why. Similarly, the differences in the perceptions and role definition of different teaching and administrative staff indicate that we cannot and should not assume a common and shared understanding of issues such as one's perceived decision-making capacity or freedom.

In the final analysis, the studies on which this paper is based, indicate that understanding and explaining the conditions and context that surrounds a systemic change effort, is difficult and requires multiple sources of evidence; that professional staff are not homogeneous in their perceptions of their role and that of other staff members, and that there are important differences in these perceptions; and, that the question of how much is enough in terms of who wants, calls for, initiates, and sustains systemic change is left basically unanswered.

**TABLE 1**  
**Perceptions on the Influence of World Events and Changing World Conditions**  
**Yonkers**

ITEM	Teachers		Principals		Central		Parents	
	x	sd	x	sd	x	sd	x	sd
The well-being of this community is affected by economic events in other parts of the world	6.2 *	2.1	7.1	1.2	7.3	2.1	5.9	2.3
The well-being of this community is affected by political events in other parts of the world	5.8 **	2.2	7.3	1.2	6.8	2.2	5.7	2.4
The well-being of this community is affected by environmental events in other parts of the world	5.8 **	2.2	7.2	1.2	6.8	2.2	5.7	2.4
People in this community need to know the cultures and values of different peoples	7.6	1.8	8.2	.9	8.0	1.5	7.2	2.2
The world that children today will live in as adults will be different from the one in which you live	8.1	1.4	8.6	.6	8.6	.8	8.0	1.6
Schools are preparing students adequately to live in a changing world	4.6 **	1.9	5.2	1.5	3.4	1.3	5.0	2.4

Central    Central Office Administration

\*      Statistically significant differences between teachers and central office administration staff ( $p < .05$ ).

\*\*     Statistically significant differences between teachers and principals and between teachers and central office administrative staff ( $p < .05$ ).

**TABLE 2**  
**System Where Change Is Most Likely To Occur**  
**Yonkers**

**System where change will occur**

	<b>Parents %</b>	<b>Staff %</b>
Technological system	83.9	85.8
Environmental system	84.9	81.9
Social system	72.4	75.8
Economic system	73.6	71.1
Cultural system	69.3	65.2
Political system	54.2	52.9

**TABLE 3**  
**Perceptions on Teachers' Role in Decision-Making Processes**

	ET mean	MT mean	HT mean	P mean	CO mean
"Teachers are part of decision making regarding administrative issues"	3.6 *	3.9	3.3	5.1	3.4
"Teachers are part of decision making regarding curriculum issues"	4.5 *	5.1	4.4	6.6	4.1
"Teachers are part of decision making processes regarding budget issues"	2.3 **	2.5	2.4	3.7	2.7
"Teachers are part of decision making processes regarding the selection of instructional materials"	5.6 *	5.9	5.5	7.4	5.4
"Teachers are part of decision-making processes regarding scheduling issues"	3.6 **	3.6	3.4	5.7	3.4
"Teachers are part of decision making processes regarding discipline issues"	4.7 **	4.7	4.4	6.8	4.7

ET Elementary teachers  
MT Middle school teachers  
HT High school teachers  
P Principals  
CO Central office administration

\* The differences between the ratings of teachers and principals, between principals and central office administration, and between middle and high school teachers are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

\*\* The differences between the ratings of teachers and principals are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).



**TABLE 4**  
**Climate for Innovation**

	ET x	MT x	HT x	P x	CO x
"Teachers in this school district are willing to explore and inquire into different ways of teaching and learning"	6.5 *	6.3	5.8	5.1	4.7
"The administration of this school district encourages teachers to experiment with new ideas and strategies"	6.3 **	6.3	5.8	7.1	5.9

ET Elementary teachers  
 MT Middle school teachers  
 HT High school teachers  
 P Principals  
 CO Central office administration

\* The differences between the ratings of teachers and principals, between teachers and central office administration, between elementary and high school teachers and between middle and high school teachers are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

\*\* The differences between the ratings of elementary and high school teachers and between middle and high school teachers are statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

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