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PROMOTING THE STUDY AND PRACTICE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

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EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

VOLUME 6 • SPRING 1987 • NUMBER 1

Letter from the Editor 2

ARTICLES

The Second Wave: New Directions in Planning
A. Perry Johnston and Joseph B. Moore 3

Managing Strategic Planning: A Systems
Theory Approach
Jeffrey L. Gilmore and G. Gregory Lozier 12

A Citizen Visiting Team: Planning and Implementation
Herbert H. Sheathelm 24

Paradigmatic Contexts of Models of Educational
Planning and Decision Making
Don Adams 36

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conference 1987: General Information 48

Invitation to Submit Manuscripts 55

Membership/Subscription 56

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *Educational Planning* focuses, in a broad sense, on issues relating to planning effectiveness. The articles contributed range from the very practical "how to" to theoretical discussions which question fundamental foundations underlying the entire practice of planning.

Johnson and Moore define four forces—economic, excellence priorities, political ideology, and research and theory—which bring new conceptualizations to educational planning and change. The new waves of educational reform are seen as reflections from the past which rest heavily on older visions of rationality and; therefore, promise little that has not been seen before. Few clear answers are seen which replace static goals, objectives, and procedures. Yet, the authors present a positive argument for planning which recognizes the "naturally occurring" reality of the classroom and the total system.

In the domain of higher education, Gilmore and Lozier present several historic problems within the planning field—its mechanistic nature, limited participation, and the translation of strategic planning into day-to-day operations. A solution to these problems is presented which sees comprehensive planning as viable, but only when a systems perspective is utilized in a way which envisions the organization as a totality and where external scanning is practiced.

Sheathelm sees success in planning as resting on community support. This local support can be developed by establishing a means where members of the community form visiting teams which interact with a school for several days. The author presents a model, based on observations in eight schools, by which the visiting team concept can be implemented. The model is presented as effective but requires careful consideration.

Difficulty in educational planning is presented by Adams as being, in part, a result of utilizing planning paradigms in an inappropriate context. A topology of social planning paradigms is presented in relation to various planning and systems concepts. He divides planning models into two broad categories, hard systems and soft systems. The former are appropriate for classical rational models while the latter require flexible plans in a humanistic/interpretative context.

As a group, this set of articles presents interesting counterpoints and divergent perspectives. This divergence reflects the differences of opinions found among planners and theoreticians in general. Several of the ideas presented could be of interest in the classroom.

The editors welcome letters and comments on all articles and on any issue pertinent to educational planning. We will attempt to publish comments of interest to the readership. The International Society for Educational Planning has a specific interest in idea exchanges. This includes the exchange of information from practitioners relative to "what works," anecdotal experiences, and field-based research. Authors are strongly encouraged to submit manuscripts dealing with these topics.

Robert H. Beach

THE SECOND WAVE: NEW DIRECTIONS IN PLANNING

The second wave of national reform reports on education has reflected and is creating forces for fundamental change in planning. The assumptions and theory which have sustained contemporary educational planning are being overwhelmed with altered political and organizational conceptions of "what works." By mid-1986 it had become clear that this second wave would establish new expectations for the governance and control of education—and consequently for planning.

Listen to the National Governors' Association (NGA):

we're ready to give up a lot of state regulatory control—even fight for changes in the law to make it happen—if schools show us where less regulation makes the most sense. (NGA, 1986, p. 4)

And to the Carnegie Forum:

This (Carnegie) framework implies a transformation of the environment for teaching. School systems based on bureaucratic authority must be replaced by schools in which authority is grounded in the professional competence of the teacher. . . (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986, p. 55, emphasis added).

Within just a few years, many conventions about education have been challenged. Involved are conceptions of a radical restructuring of education which have significant implications for the expectations of planning.

This paper is concerned with the forces behind the rethinking of the structure of schooling and what restructuring means for planning. In brief, it is our thesis that four distinct forces have emerged during the 1980s, each of which has contributed to a changed context for educational planning: 1) shifts in what are seen as compelling state interests in education; 2) realignments of conventional principles of government; 3) a "systems break" in political ideology; and 4) an emergence of new organizational research and theory. The confluence of these forces is synergistic and requires that planners be attentive to a conception of planning which simultaneously satisfies demands emanating from each of the four forces *and* retains conventional ideas as we make a transition to new conceptions of the planning function.

FORCE ONE: THE ECONOMY AS THE COMPELLING STATE INTEREST

The compelling state interest in education for the mid-1980s was forcefully articulated as an economic interest in *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE), 1983). Irrespective of the mention of a state

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interest in democracy, the overwhelming message from that widely publicized document is one of education for economic purposes, i.e., education as an investment in the productive capacity of the future worker. From this human capital position, the argument assumes the need for basic skills in a simple input-output conception: if students learn more basic skills, America can regain its international economic dominance. What students are to learn is defined by their work and our national conception of "rightful place" in the world.

Three years after *A Nation at Risk*, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986) published a report whose intent was carried clearly in the name of the study group. The importance of this view of educational purpose is not that it is new, for certainly it is not. But this dominance of the economic interest has two political effects. First, as different goals are emphasized, a necessary rethinking of what schools should be doing leads to important political consequences concerning the public policy question of "who gets what." Our point is simply that when priorities are reordered, when the conception of what good education encompasses is changed, the old is challenged, and the climate for something new is established.

Second, and of at least equal importance, the emphasis on the economic threat to America has acted as a center of gravity to pull political and business leaders into the orbit around what schools do and how they operate. As the economic argument clearly linked the purpose of the schools to our national future, influential people have become active and involved in a national "cause" which has created a forceful politic. Changes of some sort are almost bound to happen. It is difficult to work as usual under the bright glare of politics. This alone does not suggest a direction for planning, but it does suggest a reexamination and unfreezing of what education does and how it does it.

FORCE TWO: THE EXCELLENCE PRIORITY

A Nation at Risk (1986) also triggered an emphasis on "excellence." As it turns out, there were very important effects of this seemingly innocent expression. First, the emphasis on excellence realigned what might be termed the fundamental principles of government which include excellence in a nest of first principles with equity, accountability, efficiency, responsiveness, and confidence in government (schools) (Roberts, 1986). It is not that excellence was not important and then suddenly was, but that it was less pronounced in the company of other principles. The effect of the shift in emphasis has been to realign the other principles within the constellation.

For a decade and a half before the 1980s, the concern of government in education was tilted more towards equity than excellence. It is an easy matter to make the case that equity can be mandated and regulated from the top down (Green, 1983). Law cannot eradicate the subtleties of discrimination, for example, but it can directly address and rectify specific racial balances within schools. The effects of national civil rights policy are clear and evident.

A similar national policy regarding "excellence," however, is not possible given a contemporary and more sophisticated concept of what that entails. The 1986 reports got past the simplistic conception of the early 1980s reports which equated

excellence with test scores. NGA (1986) made it clear that educational excellence was thought of in more idiosyncratic terms:

We're not ready to bargain away minimum standards. . . . But we have learned that real excellence can't be imposed from a distance. Governors don't create excellent schools; communities—local school leaders, teachers, parents, and citizens—do. (NGA, 1986, p. 4)

As Green has argued, an "excellent education" **has different meanings to those engaged in the process of achieving it.** *Policy* deals with what is good "in general . . . for the most part," said Green. Policy is not generally suitable to advancing the cause of what appears day-to-day as excellence:

the educational rhetoric of the classroom and the home is not . . . (policy) talk at all. It has to do with particular persons in particular settings and with differences that demand attention. . . . Surely, as any teacher might reflect, "all of this talk of public policy cannot bear upon tomorrow's class because in tomorrow's class "in general, on the whole, and for the most part" simply do not appear. (Green, p. 334)

As Peters and Waterman (1982) contend, excellence is something that can be nurtured but not mandated. Excellence is more easily recognized as it occurs than it is stipulated in rules to follow. There is no one road to excellence. If that is so, then how excellence is achieved is not by passing a law, and how excellence is known is not by conventional state policy of aggregating scores—or at least not the scores alone. In this conception, assumptions of the rational accountability model (normal curve) coupled with bureaucratic structure (pyramid) are violated. Regression toward the mean is not what is meant by excellence. Instead of the normal curve we think beyond or off the curve; in place of the conventional pyramid, we stand it on its head—concentrated to deconcentrated.

Different ways of promoting and measuring excellence suggest dramatic changes in the structure of schooling. Say the Carnegie writers:

Policymakers will be tempted to implement only those features of this plan that cost little in organizational trauma or dollars. That would inevitably defeat the purpose, because the result would be to leave in place the forces that make the current system work the way it does. It is the entire structure that needs an overhaul. (Carnegie, p. 57, emphasis added)

To align planning with the proposed structure is to move from a centralist, logical and deductive conception of planning to a more decentralized, empirical, inductive and loose planning model. This shift fits hand-in-glove with the 1980s ideology of government.

FORCE THREE: POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

A third factor which is shaping a new reality for the planner is the political ideology of the 1980s, often associated with President Reagan. Whether the President is the cause or only an important marker in an historical stream is unimportant for our purposes. The point is that this decade is marked by deregulation, decontrol, decentralization, and deconcentration. Irrespective of form, 1980s ideology is shifting power and attention *from* the center *to* the periphery (Schon, 1971). A political ideology has robustly reasserted itself which is in accord with an American democratic tradition of individualism and private, small town, and local initiative. The economic equivalent is in the marketplace of competitive capitalism and such schooling equivalents as vouchers in education.

Our point is not to argue the merits of "strong democracy" (Barber, 1984) or of market approaches to schooling (Carnegie, p. 92), but only to underscore the importance of political currents to the education establishment. Not only education but all of government is awash in a tidal flood of ideology. Of course, fads come and fads go. Bureaucratic wisdom is to figure out which surface currents can be safely manipulated or ignored, and which historical tides can be neither ignored nor commanded. That is where planners are today, we think, negotiating the shoals of, on the one side, what to keep of the conventional paradigm, and on the other, how to adopt the newest wave of reform efforts as led by Carnegie and the National Governors' Association. As if to add punch, the directions of political ideology are reinforced by an emerging research and theory base which directly address the benefits of this approach to the governance of education, the fourth and final force with which we will deal.

FORCE FOUR: RESEARCH AND THEORY

The fourth force influencing the governance of education comes from an empirical base of research. First, there is the literature on organizational behavior which argues the need for organizations to focus on people (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Adams, 1983; Boder, 1985). This does not mean personnel policy in the conventional sense, but rather a focus which supports people **as Individuals**, as sources of renewable energy and as sources of information critical to a productive and efficient organization. In order to be successful, the argument goes, those most closely associated with the productive work must be encouraged to fit the general policy of the organization to the particular context of the work.

For education, this means that schools and classrooms are places where resources are "turned into" the learning of children (Dreeben & Barr, 1983). Classrooms are, in this sense, analogous to the shoproom floor. To continue the analogy, it does not make (productive) sense to make policy without considering the "shoproom floor" **from the perspective of those who work there**. The research in schools of Goodlad (1984) and Sizer (1984) thoroughly supports this idea, as does testimony taken from teachers who document the variability of the classroom and the need for flexibility to meet the variance (Vermont Seminar, 1986). In short, the research suggests the absurdity of policy that is at odds with the reality of the particular context of implementation.

In this vein also is the recent body of literature on policy implementation. Efforts to fine tune the conventional rational model of policy making—for example, in clarifying legislation, tightening regulatory procedures, or providing more resources to overwhelm the existing system—all come to a similar fate. If the people and the place of implementation are not factored in, policy intent and action remain far apart (Weatherly and Lipsky, 1978; Berman, 1980).

Richard Elmore (1980) suggests that policy planners start with a sense of what is desired and make policy "backwards" from the implementation site. The assumption here is that policy makers can recognize a problem and can provide resources to resolve it, but they do not have to pretend they know more than the implementors about how to solve it. Irrespective of the particular arena of policy, the central message is invariably the same: fidelity of implementation, "getting results," is not accomplished by legislative fiat or regulatory muscle. Legislation and regulation remain important in education policy making, but the difference between now and the 1970s is the subtle but powerful one of distinction between **directing and guiding and supporting.**

ANALYSIS

Our argument is that these four developing forces have merged and become entangled, if not integrated, within the current educational reform movement. The economic imperative, Force One, has drawn business and political leaders into education. However, the perspective that generates their interest and can sustain reform is the same perspective that threatens reform policy initiatives. Their perspective has been framed by a simple cause-and-effect relationship between academic excellence and economic stability. The "first wave" solutions to promote academic excellence which followed this rationale ignored recent organizational and implementation research and, predictably, have not achieved the desired goals.

A major question is whether the "second wave," which is far more ambiguous, can nevertheless sustain political interest. Of course, the code word "excellence" is alluring. It draws in all the players under the same banner, the same principle. However, while the abstraction may suggest temporary cohesion in the early stages of the policy process, the abstraction offers no direction for policy initiatives. Excellence means all things to all people: for some, a return to their perception of the past, for some, an adaptation of the perceived present, and for others, the creation of some new future. This may be one reason why "educational excellence" is currently, according to Governor Kean, "good politics."

Traditional, rational policy models are out of joint with the second wave of reform policies. The latter require flexible, dynamic systems—if not in place of, at least in addition to the traditional models. Rational models can be reasonably effective for implementation of prescriptive policies—specific, measurable policy initiatives in which the interests of the center override the interests of the periphery. This is especially true when there are sufficiently attractive political benefits to justify the center's dominance. In examples such as civil rights, education for the handicapped, or minimum requirements for graduation, it is the center's intent to override any competing peripheral interests.

However, compelling state interest in education is a function of what the state is trying to achieve, tempered by the context for achieving it. Thus, the rational policy model is ineffective for the development and implementation of more philosophical policy which may not be attempting to override the periphery's interest, but to stimulate and support that interest. The state or federal government can force a school system to admit black students, but it cannot *force* a supportive academic experience. It can force students to complete four years of high school English, but it cannot force four years of increasing intellectual growth and challenge. It can force a school to repair a dangerous roof, but it cannot force an enriched school climate under that roof. The outcomes so urgently sought in policy initiatives today require the enthusiasm and professionalism of policy implementors at the school level—teachers, administrators, parents, and community members.

Each state, however, maintains compelling interests which justify prescriptive policies which override potentially conflicting periphery interests. Despite our criticisms of the traditional, rational policy model, we do not support or encourage its demise. For example, gains made in civil rights legislation or education of the handicapped must be sustained, refined, and regulated. This tight center-periphery link, premised upon the regulatory relationship, is the dominant interorganizational structure. This relationship may have been productive for issues such as equity, but it is counterproductive, at least in certain respects, for issues such as excellence.

Reform in the second wave appears to be the very familiar one of reorganization. Ordinarily there is nothing particularly hopeful in this, as reorganization typically does little to alter fundamental directions, means, or results. The radicalism of Illich suggests that we throw out the entire structure and start over. But as Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, and other founding fathers understood, overt radicalism is not necessarily required to achieve significant change. Radicals can come dressed in conservative clothes. What makes second wave proposals different is that they call for a *realignment of power essentially within the existing structure*. The key is to realign by taking into account an information-rich, self-help, democratized tendency toward a decentralized social and political context, while simultaneously providing stewardship for the interests of the state. We are looking at a center-periphery concept of structure, either pyramid or star, *as well as* a network concept of tangled, enmeshed crisscrosses. The architectural structure remains intact, but functionally how the job is perceived to be done is changed to what research says is happening anyway—and power shifts accordingly. This distinction is important because structure is resilient, concrete, and continuous. Power, on the other hand, is relational and always flowing, shifting, and changing. In the second wave of reform, the focus is on placing the power of decision making at those points which make the most sense from an operational, empirical perspective. But the political threat of loss of position is largely removed by assuring familiar structure.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNERS?

The first and perhaps most obvious implication is that the planner must be able to bridge the cultures of education and politics. The 1980s reforms are clearly political in nature; we cannot argue, at least with any effect, the need to keep

politics out of education or education out of politics. The joining of the two is a fact of life in the mid-1980s. The planners' domain is *both* education and politics, but he lives on the bridge between the two. Given this conception of role, the first part of the planning job description is that of educator—educating politicians about the culture, functions, and issues in education and educating educators about the culture, functions, and issues in politics. In less complex terms, for 1986 this means bridging the cultures of those whose aim is to augment human capital and technological capability through the schools and those whose reason for being in education is principally to "enrich the mind and ennoble the spirit" (Knowlton and Zeckhauser, 1986, p. 10).

The intellectual core for the 1980s planner is the leadership of a new educational design. The new policy planner is first and foremost a metapolicy planner, a person who plans the capacity for change to occur in the system. The planner is in this sense an architect who, knowledgeable about the political ideological context, carefully informed about educational research, and with a good sense of what the system is to do, works with all of those who live in the house of education to get the job done. A metapolicy planning function is to develop an environment that generates new capacities for creativity and self-renewal (Gardner, 1965; Schon, 1971), including a relaxation of political and organizational constraints (Dror, 1971, pp. 74-9) and the new patterns for decision-making suggested by the organizational and implementation literature.

Restructuring of the schools as called for in the 1986 reports and conferences requires a restructuring of the entire system of education. As things stand presently, "the system runs the system," according to Goodlad (1986), and does so without attention to an overall conception of what the system is to *do*. It is up to the planner to translate the legitimate political expression of what schools are to do into a new system that responds to the forces with which this paper dealt.

Planners are, then, design experts, educators, and creators in developing a new, more productive, more efficient way of schooling America's youth. If the decade of the 1970s was the age of information, the 1980s is the age of knowledge and design. Working smarter *means* designing better. We have incredible design opportunities in education: teachers given an opportunity to address the effect of any given policy on the classroom, or to state their views of the resources and environment needed to make teaching productive and satisfying, suggest one way of starting the restructuring process.

But the role we envision goes beyond just involvement of others and is the educational one of helping educators to reconceptualize what we do. For example, *better* does not always mean *more*. As envisioned by the Carnegie Forum, a reconceptualization of the classroom is not necessarily more costly. Better is not necessarily more expensive. Reimagine a conception of education, as Shanker put it, of "hooking up a kid to a resource" (Shanker, 1986). What configurations of human and technological resources might be effective, efficient, and provide quality of life for students and educators? There are dozens of state initiatives, but very few in the direction of encouraging, guiding, and assisting local districts in redeveloping structures for education which suit "center" requirements, local expressions of goals, and local contexts. Even further, who is looking at the question of how the state itself learns (Schon, 1971), not just about new issues but

as part of a network of learning systems appropriate to the technology and ideology of the 1980s? We believe that the present historical moment invites just such opportunity. No one is better positioned to play a lead role in this initiative from within than are education planners.

This is not familiar terrain for most of us, for in the place of clarity we get *necessary* ambiguity, and in the place of product we get process and product, or even more ambiguously, product as process. The tension is in the ambiguity of letting go and hanging on. As parents, we sort of understand this process as our children mature, but even as we go through it many questions remain: how did we do it? how did we know when to do what? and did we do it well? There are really few clear answers in this conception which replaces, in part, the static stability of goals, objectives, and procedures with the enormously more complex dynamic stability of guidelines, support, and experiment. The logical basis of the rationalistic conception is being deemphasized (not replaced) in favor of the empirical, pragmatic, "naturally occurring" reality of the classroom—and the entire educational system. Our job as planners is to design, *with others*, a workable scheme of loose *and* tight, rational *and* organic, and the legitimate political need for commonality *and* the educational need for individuality.

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MANAGING STRATEGIC PLANNING: A SYSTEMS THEORY APPROACH

Most college and university executives are now familiar with Keller's (1983) admonition to adopt better management techniques, lest the spectre of a declining traditional clientele, financial crises, an outmoded curriculum, an aging professoriate, increasing competition from heretofore ignored sectors of postsecondary education, and technological imperatives leave some institutions floundering, and yet others drowning, in a wake of adversity and change (p. 43). Keller promotes strategic planning as a means to make "the implicit, inarticulate, and private explicit, articulate, and public" (p. 70). Is higher education once again adopting the latest business fad, at a time when, *Business Week* (January 20, 1986) tells us, corporate planning staffs are being substantially reduced or eliminated? Does the "back-to-basics" movement in corporate strategic planning (Payne, 1986) suggest that higher education should look in other directions to find improved management techniques? Or, can we expect the application of strategic planning concepts to be different in higher education?

Most faculty and staff view these initiatives with skepticism, reservation, boredom, and often downright hostility. Faced with a mix of high expectations from the president and resistance from the faculty, along with reports of growing disaffection with strategic planning in the business world and even some personal doubts about the efficacy of past projects, a planning executive may wonder what has been wrong with planning efforts in the past. Are there any theories or models not directly associated with planning which could help get a better handle on the complexities of the planning process?

Our purpose in this paper is to present a systems theory approach to strategic planning and, in so doing, present a framework for conceptualizing and managing the process more effectively. Our aim is not so much to present some great new discovery. In fact, we believe the basic concepts of strategic planning are correct. Accordingly, we seek to generate a renewed perspective on old planning constructs. Our premise is that it is wise to take an occasional step back from the practical, daily application of a planning process to look at planning in the context of existing organizational theory. Such an exercise can provide the basis for establishing some new initiative or for defending a change in process that was intuitively felt to be the right direction.

Toward those ends then, we will review some of the problems in past strategic planning efforts and present a synopsis of systems theory. Then, we will apply a systems framework to the planning process and demonstrate how a systems view can help managers reassess their strategic planning efforts. Finally, we will suggest how systems theory and a total planning management approach can be used to increase the impact of strategic planning on decisions.

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PROBLEMS OF PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Early approaches to planning had their roots in management science and relied heavily on a rational decision-making process supported by quantitative information and sophisticated modeling and forecasting techniques (Richardson & Rhodes, 1985). This approach to planning was adopted by colleges and universities in the seventies and was viewed as a rational method for the deployment of resources. With an emphasis on managing for efficiency and on "doing it right," it was seen at first as an improvement over the traditional incremental approach.

The incremental approach was not only a more familiar and natural way of planning, but it also was viewed as a means of coping with powerful interest groups both inside and outside the organization. With an emphasis on leading for effectiveness and on "asking the right questions," the incremental approach to planning was a way to reconcile political and interest group conflicts.

Both approaches had problems, however. Incrementalism focused on short-term solutions and often encouraged power brokering. The scientific approach failed to take root because of its burdensome time requirements and its poor record of forecasting.

In the 1980s, strategic planning has come along as a third approach to planning. It is, in essence, a synthesis of "the best wisdom of both approaches" (Keller, 1983, p. 108). With an emphasis on organizational mission and the *process* of decision making, strategic planning has been defined as a form of planning in which

the primary purpose . . . is to foster institutional adaptation by assuring congruence between an institution and its relevant and often changing environment, by developing a viable design for the future of the institution, by modifying it as needed, and by devising strategies that facilitate its accomplishment. (Peterson, 1980, p. 140)

However, strategic planning also has had some problems. First, it too has often become mechanistic and heavily dependent upon modeling techniques. There are various descriptions of strategic planning methodology, but almost all chart similar steps for conducting an organization analysis including: defining mission and goals; identifying problems and needs; appraising institutional capabilities and constraints; developing possible alternative strategies and courses of action; assessing the alternatives and matching them to program opportunities, resource requirements, and organizational priorities; implementing chosen courses of action; and evaluating outcomes. While these stages provide a useful methodology for planning, they often become ends in themselves generating mounds of paperwork in the matter of bulky plans and budget forms, but building little in the way of commitment and support for the planning process or the end results and little in the way of tangible outcomes. As a result, planning is practiced too often as a form of control as opposed to a means for promoting creative thinking.

Another problem has been a lack of participation by certain sets of key organizational stakeholders. Institutional planners have either been isolated in their offices conducting strategic planning on their own, or have been involved with only

a few constituency groups, most notably faculty and budget executives, in planning for the institution. This tends to focus too much attention on financial planning to the exclusion of human resources and facilities planning.

A final major problem area has been difficulty in linking strategic plans to day-to-day decisions. While strategic planning today is viewed as an ongoing process, the process has not realized its full potential for providing a foundation for campus-wide tactical and operational planning and decision making. This can be attributed, in many instances, to the fragmented approach to planning. Peterson (1980) questions the extent to which the planning process should integrate the full scope of organizational functions and programs, organizational units, and types of resources, and he suggests it is a perplexing problem beyond the scope of most planning efforts and managerial ability (pp. 124-125). We take the position that fragmented planning, although initially perceived as easier to accomplish, ultimately leads to ineffectual decision making. What has been lacking is a holistic view of the organization and the process.

In our view, what is needed is an approach which would address these major deficiencies in the current practice of strategic planning. What is required is a strategic *management* posture which pays more attention to system interdependencies and process management techniques and to campus-wide decision making—what Allen (1985) has defined as "the infusion of strategic principles in the running of a business" (p. 6). A framework for such an approach is provided by systems theory.

SYSTEMS THEORY

Systems theory is based on the concepts of wholeness, interrelatedness, subsystems, and openness, and "provides a basis for integration by giving us a way to view the total organization in interaction with its environment and for conceptualization of relationships among internal components or subsystems" (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1979, p. 97). The basic tenet of general systems theory, which was originally developed to explain biological phenomena¹, is that "structure and function of both natural and social/cultural phenomena can be best understood through investigation of aggregations of interacting elements rather than by concentrating on the elements themselves" (Poister, 1978, p. 33). It is important to note here that some contributors to systems theory (Demeke, 1973; Silvern, 1973; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1979) regard these elements as being interdependent rather than as interacting or interrelated; they conceive of the elements as being inseparable parts of an integrated whole in much the same way as the heart is an interdependent part of the body. Tied closely to the tenet of interrelatedness or interdependence is the concept of subsystems which posits that every system is composed of subsystems and that, in turn, every system "is a sub-system of a larger, more inclusive system which makes up its immediate environment" (Sistrunk & Maxson, 1973, p. 19).

A major contribution to systems theory, the "skeleton of science" as Boulding (1956) characterized it, was provided by Katz and Kahn (1966) when they adopted it to the study of organizations. They added several key concepts to its underlying organismic paradigm: the importation of energy from the environment, the transformation of that energy by the organization into some product or service

("throughput"), the exportation of the product back into the environment, and the reenergizing of the organizational system from its environment. These concepts suggest that systems are "open" in the sense that they "exchange energy and information with their environment" (Demeke, 1973, p. 28).

When applying systems theory to organizations, one additional concept emerges. It is necessary to bear in mind that organizations are goal-seeking systems that "function with control mechanisms characterized by feedback loops" (Poister, 1978, p. 34). Organizations are able to evaluate their output, environmental constraints, resource availability, and performance with respect to their goals, and channel this information back to managerial decision makers as inputs to the system. The organization can, in this manner, adjust its future direction and functioning accordingly.

A system may be defined, therefore, as "an organized unitary whole composed of two or more interdependent parts, components, or subsystems and delineated by identifiable boundaries from its environmental suprasystem" (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1979, p. 18). Within that system context, an organization becomes

- 1) A subsystem of its broader environment, consisting of
- 2) Goal-oriented people with a purpose
- 3) A technical subsystem—people using knowledge, techniques, equipment, and facilities
- 4) A structural subsystem—people working together on integrated activities
- 5) A psychosocial subsystem—people in social relationships
- 6) A managerial subsystem—which coordinates the subsystems and plans and controls the overall endeavor.

(Kast & Rosenzweig, p. 18)

Thus, open systems theory can provide a useful framework for analyzing and coordinating strategic planning activities. Systems theory aids in understanding the environmental forces affecting higher education and the role of managerial choice in aligning an organization with its environment. Systems theory also provides a framework for organizing mechanisms for participatory decision making, and for understanding the interplay of subsystem functions and actors. And, it allows us to develop a construct of the world as a unified organic whole and to understand the relationships and linkages in it. The orientation which systems theory suggests—a perspective of the whole organization, an understanding of the interchange with the external environment, a sensitivity for the values and actions of stakeholders, and an appreciation of the interdependence of all these components—is one which can aid in reinvigorating the formal strategic planning structure, in carrying out the planning process, and in making tactical and operational decisions on a day-to-day basis.

Strategic planning when viewed from the systems perspective has a future orientation resulting in decisions made on the basis of possible or desired future states to be achieved or enacted rather than on the basis of plans developed in some past time. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for managers to avoid focusing on just one problem or institutional component at a time, such as annual budgeting, union issues, or affirmative action programs. And, it speaks to the need for administrators to bear in mind system interdependencies when devising new rules, procedures, and structures. Conversely, managers can use this knowledge

of system interdependencies to forge strong coalitions to gain an environmental or competitive advantage and support of institutional plans.

APPLYING SYSTEMS THEORY TO PLANNING

The purpose of this section of the paper is to apply a systems framework to the planning process and demonstrate how a systems view can help managers reassess their strategic planning efforts. This section will also attempt to demonstrate how systems theory can be used to address some of the problems associated with the strategic planning approach reviewed above.

While most of the techniques used in strategic planning are well known and are individually applied in varying degrees by university planners, a systems theory approach encourages managers to adopt a more comprehensive view of their planning efforts. In this view, the principal considerations are to establish participative decision systems keyed to the application of strategic information to all ongoing institutional processes and to place an emphasis on analyzing and managing a wide range of variables rather than only one or two.²

We suggest that there are five key elements in a total planning management approach based on systems theory. These elements are discussed below and illustrated by Figure One (opposite page). Before proceeding, we should reiterate that these elements are not new. Rather they reinforce basic understandings about strategic planning. We contend that the problems with strategic planning are less with the idea itself and more with the practice of implementation.

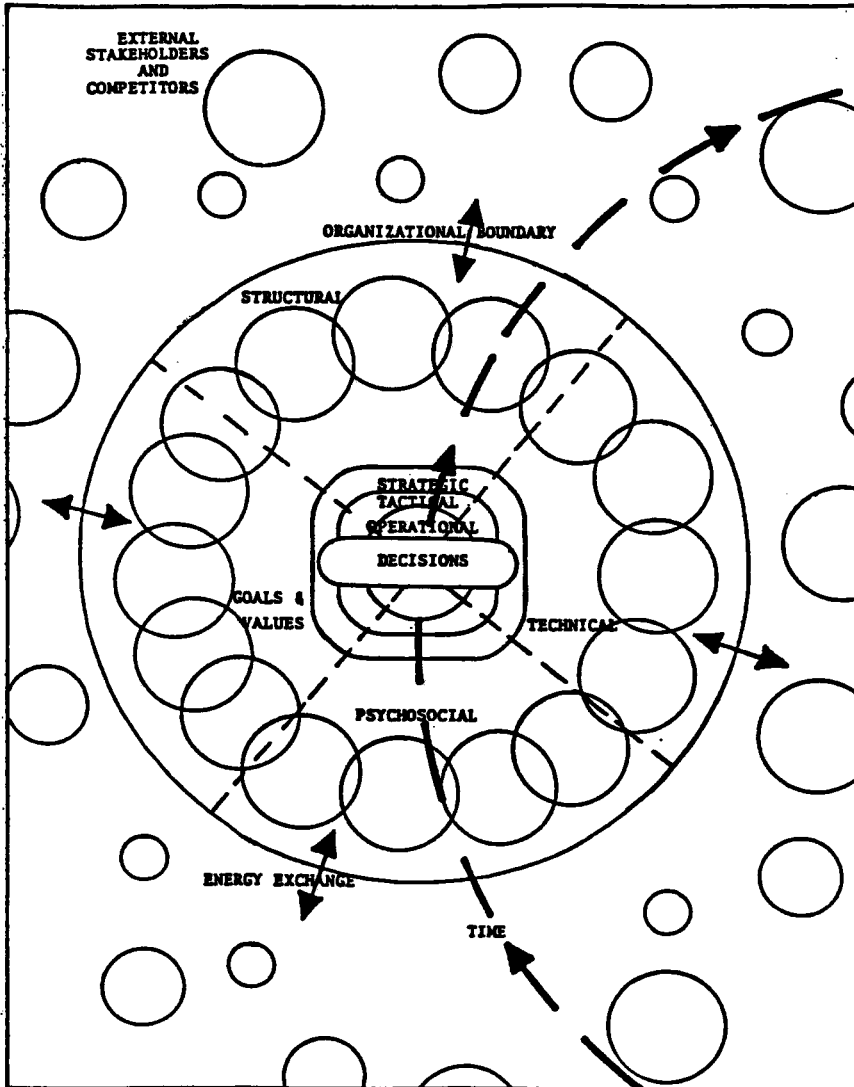
ORGANIZATIONS AS OPEN SYSTEMS EXCHANGING ENERGY WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

The very forces described in the opening paragraph of this paper—changing demographics and the decline in traditional clientele, increasing competition from a host of new educational providers, calls for educational reform and accountability, varying economic and financial conditions, developing technologies (to name but a few)—are the same forces which have provided the impetus for increased planning efforts on the part of colleges and universities. Organizations have responded to these forces by attempting environmental assessments and other techniques with mixed success.

Environmental scanning is a complex and often difficult undertaking. For these reasons, many planners have either dropped these efforts or have limited their scope. An open systems perspective, however, demonstrates that the environment won't be denied. Systems theory posits that energy exchange with the environment is a normal, natural and unstoppable phenomenon for both biological and social entities alike. This view suggests that strategic planners should redouble their environmental assessment efforts and that institutions should make available adequate resources for them.

Figure 1

**A TOTAL PLANNING MANAGEMENT APPROACH
TO STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING**



**PARTICIPATIVE DECISION SYSTEMS WHICH COORDINATE
STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS**

Strategic planning is obviously more than just a series of steps to be undertaken by the planning office. The information gathered, the goals and plans developed, and the implementation of the project into tangible outcomes must be done by people beyond the walls of the planning office itself. Additionally, constituency groups both within and outside the organization will affect and be affected by both the planning process and its outcomes. The systems approach confirms the necessity of keeping stakeholder interests in mind. The planning

process should view strategic initiatives as a commitment-building activity which embraces personal value systems and organizational culture. Projects initiated in this context have a much better chance for generating participation, support, and implementation.

The systems approach also forces planners to realize not only that both external and internal constituencies exist, but that they will express their personal stake in the organization one way or another, either positively or negatively. Managers must ascertain the stakeholders aligned with each issue and take into consideration the interrelations, coalitions, and the relative degrees of power these groups represent.

Various techniques for managing stakeholder interests, such as attitudinal surveys, interviews, planning or study groups, etc., can and should be used or developed to measure the expectations and satisfactions of these groups over time and incorporated into the strategic planning process. Planners can get a handle on identifying these groups and their strengths through such techniques as developing stakeholder maps and interaction grids.³

AN EMPHASIS ON MOVING THE ORGANIZATION FORWARD AS A COORDINATED WHOLE

Due to limited resources, time, or a belief that planning is most effective when focused on problems having a high institutional priority, strategic planning efforts with a narrow scope are often conducted. The establishment of a new college or the reevaluation of an old program are often the type of activities which receive strategic analysis and planning. However, programs, colleges, and other university units do not exist alone. Decisions affecting them often have ramifications throughout the organization. The impact of an initial decision for one program or on one issue can have consequences for other key events or future developments. First order impacts can result in second order impacts which can cause third order impacts, etc.⁴

No one planning model is best for all institutions; goals, issues, resources, culture, and leadership vary from one organization to another. However, the systems approach gives planning executives and presidents a choice when making decisions about the scope of strategic efforts. If they decide on a narrow planning focus, the systems view informs them of the possibility of second order impacts resulting from any strategic decisions they may make and warns them to better anticipate and plan for these. This is preferable to being caught completely unaware of this possibility and being totally unprepared.

We prefer the more comprehensive scope for strategic planning. A wide scope allows for broader participation in strategic decision making. The consequences of particular decisions can be evaluated by a number of institutional units and potential impacts can be more readily assessed. Planning managers can use the systems approach to design formal planning structures and processes utilizing team efforts which cut across functional lines of authority. Such an approach can often increase organizational flexibility and responsiveness. In addition, authority relationships for the project can be viewed from a holistic perspective and

acknowledged either informally or formally. A technique often used to formally delineate these relationships is the development of linear responsibility charts (LRCs). One major advantage of LRCs is that they can be used to gain commitment to the project, a sense of shared values, and mutual understanding when the key participants and stakeholders are invited to take part in its development.⁵

AN ATTEMPT TO INTEGRATE DECISION MAKING AT THE STRATEGIC, TACTICAL, AND OPERATIONAL LEVEL

Systems theory and a total planning management approach suggest that strategic plans should provide a foundation for campus-wide tactical and operational decisions and a linkage to resource allocations (including fiscal, personnel, informational, technical, and physical). Whether making decisions on program planning or review, priority setting, or resource allocation at the tactical level, or whether implementing these decisions at the operational level, the approach presented in this paper encourages managers to make integrated responses to problems rather than piecemeal responses.

Furthermore, decisions at all levels are seen to be linked to each other. For example, a manager confronted with the problem of having too many students demanding a certain course should take the directions and goals laid out in the strategic plan into account before coming to a solution rather than deciding on the basis of the expediency of the moment. The decision whether to hire more professors or graduate students to teach extra sections or to move the class into larger facilities or to hold the line on enrollments should be made in line with the goals and image the institution has established for itself. More often than not, this type of decision is made in isolation and not with both strategic and operational considerations in mind.

A RECOGNITION THAT OVER TIME THE PROCESS AND THE ORGANIZATION ITSELF ARE UNDERGOING CONSTANT CHANGE

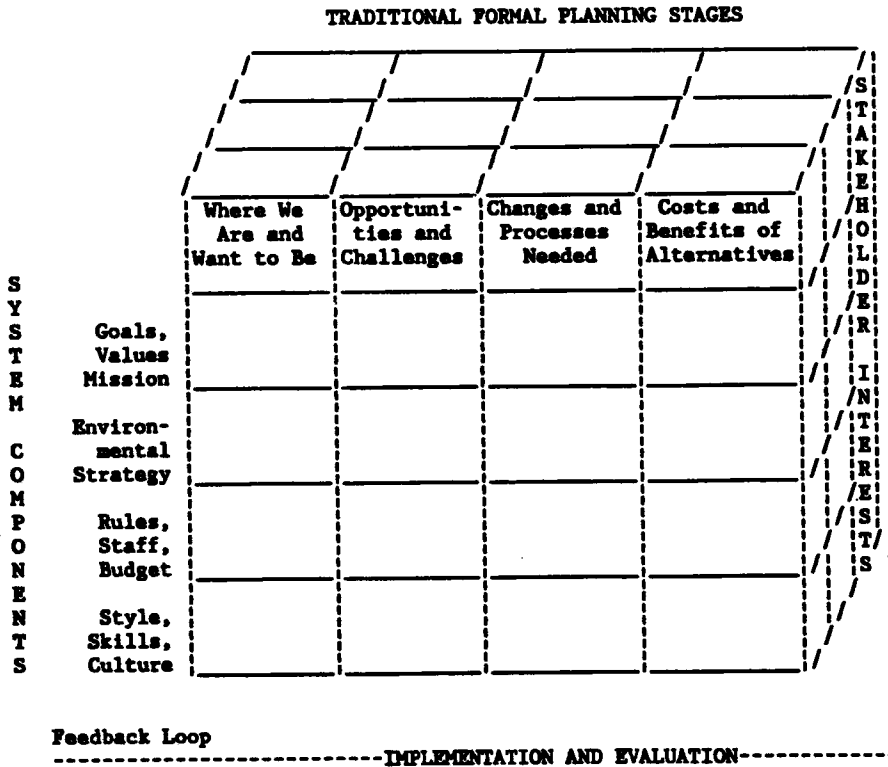
Neither organizations nor their environments are static creations. Environments are in constant flux and forces are constantly streaming through them in never-ending cycles. Organizations are constantly changing and adapting. The systems perspective adds to this view by helping managers visualize this scenario for their own organizations and to realize that the planning process itself cannot remain static or become too mechanistic. In a systems context, the future is seen as being largely subject to creation by acts of what we and others do or don't do, and planning is viewed as the design of a desirable future and the invention of ways to bring it about. Necessarily, this process is a continuing one requiring constant evaluation, feedback, and reassessment. In particular, the importance of feedback is too often ignored.

THE STRATEGIC MATRIX

Another way to view the application of a systems framework to the planning process is to see it as a strategic matrix which weds the traditional formal strategic planning stages to system components. Such a matrix is depicted in Figure Two (following page). Within each cell of the Strategic Matrix, the planning manager must take into account not only the intersection of the three planning vectors but also the interdependencies of each row, column, and file.

Figure 2

FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING ANALYSIS AND COORDINATION WITHIN A SYSTEMS CONTEXT



Source: Adapted from Matson and Deegan, 1985, pp. 141-143.

Within this framework, several of the techniques used in strategic planning efforts may be reassessed in terms of the system interdependencies expressed in the model. For example, in determining where the institution should be going, presidents and institutional planners alike should view goal setting and mission development as a commitment-building process resulting in behavioral and attitudinal support of internal and external stakeholders. This can be accomplished through planning which encourages participative decision making and which acknowledges the personal values and goals of institutional personnel and constituency groups, the opportunities and threats posed by the environment, current organizational structures and resources, and institutional culture and personal style of its leaders.

All this suggests that a manager should stop and reflect on the system and matrix elements presented above before proceeding with a decision. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1985) outlines three new skills needed by the managers of the future:

- a) power skills—skills in persuading others to invest in new initiatives;
- b) the ability to manage the problems associated with the greater use of teams and employee participation; and
- c) an understanding of how change is designed and constructed in an organization, and how the microchanges introduced by individuals relate to macrochanges or strategic reorientations.

We believe that these skills will be needed by future planners as well.

RETROSPECTIVE

Systems theory becomes valuable, then, not for introducing dramatically new insights, but as a framework for reinforcing many basic strategic planning premises. The problems often found with strategic planning applications—overfragmentation, paper driven, control oriented, mechanistic and modeling dependent, and failure to account for organizational culture and constituency groups—are more the result of how we apply strategic planning principles than with the basic constructs themselves. For example, systems theory reinforces the need for a comprehensive planning approach, one that spans all functions, organizational units, and resource types. Initiating a stand-alone major academic program review process outside the context of a broader strategic planning effort is likely to have little impact on curricular or resource allocation decisions. Failure to provide sufficient feedback to organizational subsystems ignores the important role that interested stakeholders have in both the determination of policy or resource decisions and the implementation thereof.

The link between external assessments and strategy development has not been well-established in many planning processes. Systems theory, with its emphasis on the interdependencies between external and internal subsystems, advises us not to be discouraged. Systems theory tells us why we must be more concerned with actual decisions than with printed plans. While the decisions may not always prove to be the best, they reduce the level of uncertainty about future directions.

In sum, systems theory does not provide us with absolute answers to past problems with strategic planning. It does, however, point us in the direction of reasonable improvements.

ENDNOTES

¹For examination of the foundations of general systems theory, see Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1951; 1968), W. Ross Ashby (1964; 1965; 1968), and Kenneth E. Boulding (1956; 1964).

²More information on comprehensive models may be found in Alfred and Smydra, 1985, p. 220; and in Matson and Deegan, 1985, p. 141.

³For a complete treatment of the stakeholder approach to strategic management see Freeman, 1984.

⁴For a discussion of charting issues and developing impact networks see Morrison, Renfro, and Boucher, 1984, pp. 25-39.

⁵For a further discussion of these techniques, see Cleland and King, 1983, pp. 305-308; and Freeman, 1984, pp. 162-163.

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A CITIZEN VISITING TEAM: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

An essential factor in the success of an educational program is the degree to which the "community" supports the existing and proposed programs. Too often, this support is not forthcoming and professional educators can be heard to say, "If only *they* understood what we're doing, . . ." Unfortunately, in this same community residents are apt to be saying, "Another increase in taxes? What the _____ are *they* doing now? Why can't *they* get along on the same budget as last year?"

Increasingly, taxpayers are unwilling to support programs that they do not understand. This modest proposal suggests one way that this understanding may be enhanced through extensive citizen involvement. It is based on the premise that if people have sufficient information and knowledge about the schools and their programs they are likely to support them. And what better way to develop this understanding than to visit the schools and see them in action?

The model simply proposes that a group of community residents spend two or three days visiting a school. Members of the visiting team (V.T.) would be invited by the Board of Education and be given a specific charge (generally, "let us know how you think we're doing"). The staff of the school would prepare for this visit, and would provide materials helpful to the V.T. The V.T. would be asked to prepare a report of findings and recommendations for the Board of Education. As a result of the process, the V.T. members would develop an in-depth understanding of the school and its programs and could serve as the nucleus for increased community involvement and understanding.

This approach is apt to be met with skepticism. Recently, while attending a national meeting of elementary school principals, a principal described to colleagues how twelve members of the community had spent three days in his school and had submitted a report to the Board of Education. This description was met by shock and disbelief. Typical of the comments made was, "There's no way we could do that in my school!"

But there is. However, it is an approach that requires careful thought and preparation. Unless done well, it could backfire. It is *not* always better to do "something" than nothing. Subsequent sections describe a process that may serve as a guide to those interested in implementing a citizen visiting team.¹

1.0 OBTAIN COMMITMENT AND AUTHORIZATION

Before it is possible to obtain a commitment from the professional staff and Board of Education, it will be necessary to develop an awareness of the process and a recognition as to its value to the school system. While any member of the Board or professional staff may call attention to the process, it is likely that the

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Superintendent will be the key person in generating support for any proposal that is submitted to the Board of Education.

The purpose of the V.T. process should be clarified and stated in writing by the Board of Education. This purpose statement should serve as the foundation for decision making during the planning process. The purpose statement of the West Hartford Public Schools stated:

Among the purposes of visiting committees are the following:

1. To conduct a participatory review and, within the limits of the expertise provided, a participatory assessment of the programs and needs of the school visited, and to report recommendations relating thereto to the Superintendent of Schools.
2. By "opening up" the schools to the scrutiny of a visiting committee, to reduce or close any credibility gap that may exist between the schools and the public or any segment thereof.
3. To inform the Superintendent and the Board of Education and thus the public of needs still to be met if the schools are to meet the goals established by the Board of Education and the objectives of the schools.²

This statement evolved into the following purposes statement for Regional School District 13:

Purposes of the establishment of these committees would be:

- a. to examine the school system in light of the tentative statement of systemwide goals.
- b. to determine the extent to which the educational objectives and priorities of the staff are those of the general public.
- c. to ascertain the relationship between the stated objectives of the school and observed practices.
- d. to test the degree of the committees' understanding of the educational program.
- e. to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and unmet needs of the schools.
- f. to determine the degree of efficiency of school operations and measure of accountability.³

It is essential that there be extensive involvement of the professional staff early in the process. The more staff members involved in the analysis of the model and in supporting a recommendation to the Board of Education, the less likely it is that the model will be perceived as the "Board's model" or the "Superintendent's model." In addition to the administrative council, a Superintendent would be wise to involve the teachers' organization and the appropriate administrators' group. This is particularly important because of the impact the model has on members of those groups.

This approach requires a superintendent who has a human resources management philosophy that recognizes the value of openness and the sharing of information. A philosophy which recognizes the importance of involving people (staff and community members) not just so they'll feel good, but because the result will be a better product (Sergiovanni & Carver, 1980).

This is a difficult orientation during a period of decline. There is a somewhat natural tendency to want to pull up the drawbridge and defend the schools against what often seems a hostile environment. This proposal suggests filling in the moat and breaking down the walls. The very openness may be seen by some as increasing vulnerability and exposing the schools to their critics.

It is important that the V.T. process be integrated into the long-range planning process and not be seen as an "add on." An excellent example of this is the approach used in Ellington, CT, where a different elementary school has implemented the V.T. model each of the last three years as part of a comprehensive long-range improvement plan for the school system (DeLucia & McCarthy-Miller, 1983).

And, of course, it is necessary for the Board of Education to formally authorize the development and implementation of the process within the system. It is critical that Board members fully understand the process and its implications.

2.0 DEVELOP A SYSTEMWIDE PLAN

As mentioned in Step 1, extensive involvement is important throughout the process. It might be desirable to put together an "ad hoc" committee or task force in larger school systems to develop the systemwide plan. Representatives from the various groups to be affected by the process should be included.

It is likely that most school systems will need some outside help in planning and implementing the V.T. model. A consultant may be of considerable assistance in Step 1, as well. It is extremely important that, if an outside consultant is to be utilized, the consultant be brought into the planning process very early and be involved throughout the total process.

In selecting a consultant, the following criteria should be considered:

1. demonstrated effectiveness in working with groups (professional staff and citizen groups);
2. knowledgeable about schools and school programs; and
3. experienced in the V.T. process.

West Hartford had a team of residents visit each school in the system during one school year. Each V.T. had two outside persons to assist them. One, who served as chairperson, was the president of an institution of higher education. A second person served as the consultant to the team on educational matters and was responsible for writing the report. While this model tended to lend prestige to the team and the process, the use of a single consultant seems more effective and the chairperson should probably be a resident of the community.

With the consultant's assistance, the planning team needs to consider the activities to be carried out and develop a plan for the entire school system. (Figures 1 and 2 might serve as a guide.) This should include a timetable for schools as well as an analysis of the resources that will be required to carry out the total process.

The planning team should agree upon criteria for determining the sequence of visits to schools. This might include such considerations as:

1. the present school/community relationship,
2. the perceived quality of the program,
3. the existence of "problems," and
4. the experience of the principal.

The Board of Education should determine the makeup of the V.T. as well as the procedure for selecting and inviting members. Factors to be considered should include:

- the desirable size of the V.T.
(twelve is probably the minimum number to accomplish what is proposed, and more than twenty-five becomes a logistics problem)
- the desirable makeup of the V.T.
(the V.T. should reflect the makeup of the community)
- criteria for membership
(e.g., reside in attendance area, be recommended by community groups, be "taxpayers," be parents)
- procedures for identifying potential members
(ask for volunteers, request recommendations from community groups)
- procedures for selecting members
- procedures for inviting members

The systemwide plan should also describe how the report and recommendation of the V.T. will be dealt with by the Board of Education. This should describe the presentation of the report to the Board of Education and the procedures the Board of Education will follow in analyzing and acting upon the recommendations of the V.T. The emphasis should be on process, and all concerned should recognize that the Board is making no commitments to implement the recommendations, but to an open and careful consideration of them. (See 11.0)

Figure 1
A CITIZEN VISITING TEAM: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

	<u>BD</u>	<u>CO</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>VT</u>
1. OBTAIN COMMITMENT AND AUTHORIZATION	X	X		
2. DEVELOP A SYSTEMWIDE PLAN		X		
3. DEVELOP A PLAN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL			X	
4. PREPARE A "REPORT" FOR THE VISITING TEAM			X	
5. ORGANIZE THE VISITING TEAM	X	X	X	
6. CONDUCT THE VISIT			X	X
7. PREPARE A WRITTEN "REPORT" ON THE VISIT				X
8. PRESENT REPORT TO BOARD OF EDUCATION	X			X
9. DISCUSS REPORT IN DEPTH WITH PROFESSIONAL STAFF			X	X
10. PREPARE RESPONSE TO V.T. REPORT			X	
11. DEVELOP A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS	X	X	X	
12. EVALUATE THE TOTAL PROCESS	X	X	X	X

*** RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNCTION:**

CO - Superintendent and central office administration, principals

BD - Board of Education

SS - School staff (Administration, professional, and support staff)

VT - Visiting Team

Figure 2

A CITIZEN VISITING TEAM: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

- 1.0 **OBTAIN COMMITMENT AND AUTHORIZATION**
 - 1.1 Develop awareness and recognition of need
 - 1.2 Clarify purpose of the process
 - 1.3 Integrate into long-range planning process
 - 1.4 Obtain Board of Education support and authorization

- 2.0 **DEVELOP A SYSTEMWIDE PLAN**
 - 2.1 Identify and employ consultant
 - 2.2 Develop general outline for process
 - 2.3 Determine and make arrangements for support required by the process
 - 2.4 Determine criteria for sequencing schools
 - 2.5 Develop schedule for the system
 - 2.6 Determine criteria for membership and selection process for the V.T.
 - 2.7 Develop a process for responding to the recommendations of the V.T.

- 3.0 **DEVELOP A PLAN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL**
 - 3.1 Consider the suggested process (guidelines) for the school system
 - 3.2 Determine in more detail the process for this school
 - 3.3 Determine and make arrangements for support required
 - 3.4 Identify documents and materials needed by V.T. (one might be a staff "report")
 - 3.5 Develop a plan for the visit
 - 3.6 Develop timetable for preparation
 - 3.7 Assign responsibilities

- 4.0 **PREPARE A "REPORT" FOR THE V.T.**
 - 4.1 Decide on materials to be included
 - 4.2 Conduct a "self-study"
 - 4.3 Prepare draft report (reach consensus)
 - 4.4 Prepare final report
 - 4.5 Distribute report

- 5.0 **ORGANIZE THE V.T.**
 - 5.1 Select a chairperson
 - 5.2 Invite participation
 - 5.3 Orient

- 6.0 **CONDUCT THE VISIT**
 - 6.1 Get acquainted, provide more detailed orientation
 - 6.2 Organize to complete the charge
 - 6.3 Gather information
 - 6.4 Prepare draft report
 - 6.5 Plan for presentation to staff
 - 6.6 Make presentation to staff

- 7.0 **PREPARE WRITTEN REPORT**
 - 7.1 Prepare sub-committee rough draft
 - 7.2 Prepare draft report (consolidate and edit)
 - 7.3 Submit draft report to V.T.
 - 7.4 Develop consensus of V.T.
 - 7.5 Prepare final report

Figure 2
(Continued)

- 8.0 PRESENT REPORT TO BOARD OF EDUCATION
 - 8.1 Share and discuss with staff
 - 8.2 Plan presentation to Board of Education
 - 8.3 Present to Board of Education
 - 8.4 Restate and clarify next steps
- 9.0 DISCUSS REPORT IN DEPTH WITH STAFF
 - 9.1 Share, explain, discuss
 - 9.2 Develop understanding of each group's ideas
- 10.0 DISCUSS RESPONSE TO V.T. REPORT
 - 10.1 Identify areas of agreement, disagreement
 - 10.2 Plan for further staff-community involvement
- 11.0 DEVELOP A PLAN FOR RESPONDING TO RECOMMENDATIONS
 - 11.1 Develop criteria
 - 11.2 Analyze each recommendation
 - 11.3 Develop action plan
 - 11.4 Share plan with staff of school and V.T.
- 12.0 EVALUATE THE TOTAL PROCESS
 - 12.1 Develop evaluation process and instruments
 - 12.2 Collect data
 - 12.3 Analyze
 - 12.4 Prepare report

3.0 DEVELOP A PLAN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL

If there has been sufficient involvement in the previous steps, the staff of the individual school will have some understanding of the V.T. process rather than be surprised by a sudden mandate from the Superintendent's office. It is *extremely* important that the staff understand and support the purpose of the visit.

In most school systems, obtaining this support is one of the most difficult problems in implementing the process. It is natural for staff members to be apprehensive if they perceive the process to be one in which members of the community will be visiting the school to "evaluate" them. This apprehension can be allayed somewhat by a thorough discussion of the WHY (purpose of the process); HOW (the general process to be utilized); WHAT (the visit itself and V.T. report); and WHEN (timetable for the process). Sufficient time should be provided for a thorough explanation and open discussion of these issues. The consultant, along with teachers or principals who have been through the process, can be very helpful in such a discussion.

While the building principal will necessarily assume a major responsibility for the visit preparation, it is important that the total staff (instructional and non-instructional) be involved in the planning and preparation. The school planning team should be given considerable latitude within the guidelines and timelines set by the systemwide planning team. This provides the flexibility necessary for creative approaches and helps prevent a lockstep approach to the visits.

Examples of some of the items the school planning team should consider and provide for:

- materials the V.T. will need to understand the educational program, organization and operation of the school
(The major item will most likely be a report of some type prepared by the staff. Examples of other documents are curriculum guides, policy manuals, student achievement results, teacher evaluation process manual, schedules for instructional and non-instructional programs, etc.)
- suggested activities and schedule for the V.T.
- a means for V.T. members to meet individually with staff members
(Substitutes may be required during the visit)
- get acquainted and closure sessions for V.T. and staff
- a work space for the V.T.
(This space should be private, as quiet as possible, have large tables for writing and meeting, have chalkboard, newsprint with stand, overhead projector, and comfortable furniture)
- secretarial support and writing materials
- telephone access for outside calls

For each of these items there is a wide range of possibilities, and the school planning team should not automatically do what other schools have done.

4.0 PREPARE A "REPORT" FOR THE V.T.

While this step is actually a part of 3.0 (providing materials to V.T.) it is of such importance that it is treated separately.

As the staff asks itself, "What information would be helpful to the V.T. in understanding our school?" it might consider responding to the following questions:

What are our goals/objectives?

What are we doing to achieve them?

(Curriculum, education program, activities—instructional and non-instructional)

How are we organized to carry out the activities?

(Students, staff, content, time, instructional materials, space)

What resources do we have?

(Staff, instructional materials, supplies, and equipment; educational facilities)

How do we determine how well we are doing?

(Monitoring and evaluation procedures)

What do the evaluation procedures demonstrate?

(How well are we doing?)

Obviously, responding to these questions is a very large order. In some schools, these questions have been considered on an ongoing basis, and preparing for the visit may merely require gathering existing materials and providing V.T. members with copies. Several schools utilized folders with a series of color coded mimeographed materials tucked in pockets. Multiple copies of school and school system documents were made available to the V.T. in their "work room."

Other schools have found it helpful to review these and other questions as part of a self study and prepare a special "Report" for the V.T. based on these efforts. This requires considerable time and effort, which the timetable must provide. However, it provides an unusual opportunity for the staff to take a good look at the education program. Reports may have spiral binders, a cover designed by students, and a table of contents indicating major sections of the report.

The Ellington Public Schools elected to use the characteristics of "effective schools" as a guide to the organization of the staff reports and for consideration of the V.T. in each of their schools. This reflected an interest of the Board and Administration to work toward the development of these characteristics in all schools (DeLucia & McCarthy-Miller, 1983). Other reports have been organized around more traditional categories, e.g., Philosophy and Goals; Curriculum; Organization for Instruction; Special Services; Education Facilities; Staff Development; and Administration and Finance.

The "report" should be discussed by the total staff and reflect consensus. It is then necessary to make arrangements for typing, reproducing, and distributing the report. The system-wide plan should clarify the role of the "central office" in supporting the school in this process. If the roles and responsibilities for support are made clear initially, it will eliminate considerable confusion and consternation throughout the process.

5.0 ORGANIZE THE V.T.

The Board of Education should determine the criteria for V.T. membership, as well as the selection and invitation process as part of the systemwide plan. (See 2.0)

Several months prior to the actual visit, written invitations should be extended to community residents by the Board of Education with a clear explanation of the charge to the V.T. and the time commitments that will be necessary. In most cases this correspondence should be handled by the Superintendent's office rather than the individual school.

It is helpful if a get-acquainted and orientation session can be held with V.T. members prior to the actual visit. It may be more pleasant if this meeting is held in the home of a staff or committee member rather than in the school. On one occasion the V.T. shared a dinner at a local restaurant, and on another were served refreshments in a very attractive meeting room located on the top floor of a corporate headquarters. While the orientation meeting need not be this elaborate, it is important that it be relaxed and informal. The orientation should provide a *brief* overview of the process and answer questions of the V.T. An explanation should be made that the process has been utilized in a number of schools, and that a detailed process will be presented at the first work session of the V.T.

It is helpful if a chairperson can be identified and appointed prior to the first meeting of the V.T. The chairperson can then begin to assume a shared responsibility with the consultant for getting the V.T. organized and on task.

6.0 CONDUCT THE VISIT

The first work session of the V.T. is critical to the success of the visit. Members of the V.T. will be apprehensive about their ability to carry out the charge, and at the conclusion of the meeting they must have a sense not only that it can be done, but that they know how to go about doing it.

At this session, the consultant and chairperson must establish a team approach to the effort, with the consultant available to assist the team in achieving their objective. It should be made clear that the V.T. report will reflect the thinking of the V.T., not that of the consultant. The integrity of the V.T. and the process must be affirmed.

In organizing the V.T. for the visit, there is an important balance between structure and flexibility that must be considered. Decisions regarding the organization should be made by the V.T. with the assistance of the consultant. However, the consultant must be able to provide clear suggestions as to alternative ways of organizing.

The V.T. must decide on:

- the organization of the V.T. report
(major categories with heads and subheads)
- the organization of the V.T.
(assignments and responsibilities)
- the questions to be answered within each category
(questions suggested for the staff report in 4.0 may be considered)
- the sources of information, and how it will be collected
(review documents, interview staff)

In most cases the V.T. report will follow the categories used by the staff in their report. However, the V.T. must have the freedom to address *their* areas of concern, not merely "fill in the blanks." In one school, the V.T. expressed a concern about communication between the Board of Education, administration, professional staff, and parents. A major section of the V.T. report was entitled Communication, and provided a thoughtful analysis of the issues and a series of recommendations that proved most helpful to the school system. Another concern expressed by a V.T. and addressed separately was discipline. The consultant plays a critical role in working with V.T. members and staff in such areas as they may be very sensitive.

The first morning of the visit is ordinarily devoted to organization, then the V.T. must immediately get started on their task. Subcommittees usually meet to decide how their work will be divided among members, then the V.T. members must begin visiting classrooms and interviewing staff members. It is sometimes difficult to get V.T. members to leave the friendly confines of their work room, and go into the first classroom. However, once the ice is broken the team is well on the way.

Visits usually last three days (See Figure 3). It is difficult to get team members to devote more time than this, and any less time will not allow the task to be achieved. Toward the end of the second day the subcommittee members need to start drafting their ideas so they may share them with the total V.T. during the morning of the third day.

When subcommittee reports are presented, there is often disagreement and occasionally heated discussion. The consultant and V.T. chairperson play key roles in keeping things moving and reaching consensus on major issues while not getting "hung up" on details.

Ordinarily, the V.T. meets with the staff to present a tentative report on the afternoon of the third day. This means V.T. members must plan together what they want to say, and who is going to say it. This report to the staff tends to be brief and very general, describing major impressions and expressing appreciation for the efforts of the staff. Assurances are made that provision will be made to share the report with the staff and discuss it with them in more depth.

Figure 3

CITIZENS' V.T. POSSIBLE SCHEDULE FOR VISIT

FIRST DAY

- A.M. [GET ACQUAINTED - V.T. AND STAFF
[ORIENTATION AND ORGANIZATION OF V.T.
- P.M. [V.T. SUB-COMMITTEES MEET AND ORGANIZE
[BEGIN COLLECTING INFORMATION

SECOND DAY

- A.M. [COLLECT INFORMATION
- P.M. [COLLECT INFORMATION
[START DRAFTING REPORTS

THIRD DAY

- A.M. [DRAFT REPORTS
[SHARE REPORTS WITH TOTAL V.T., REACH CONSENSUS
- P.M. [COMPLETE DRAFT REPORT
[MEET WITH STAFF TO DISCUSS TENTATIVE FINDINGS

7.0 PREPARE WRITTEN REPORT

The consultant, or person responsible for writing the V.T. report, should prepare a draft copy as soon after the visit as possible while ideas and V.T. discussion are still fresh. To the extent possible, subcommittee reports should be left intact to best reflect the ideas of the V.T. members. The person writing the draft of the V.T. report should strive to develop consistency and continuity in format. Some of this should have been discussed during the V.T. organization sessions, and then suggestions as to format should have been made again as subcommittees were starting their draft reports.

Arrangements will need to be made to type, reproduce, and distribute the draft report to V.T. members. V.T. members must have an opportunity to react to this draft report if they are expected to endorse it and support it as theirs later. A deadline should be set for V.T. members to communicate concerns about the draft report to the writer. In some cases, Visiting Teams have held several meetings to

discuss issues they believe have not been adequately dealt with in the report. A sincere attempt should be made to have the report reflect consensus of the V.T.

When consensus has been reached, a final report of the V.T. should be prepared. Sufficient copies should be reproduced to provide copies for the V.T., Board of Education, central office staff, staff of the school visited, and for desired community distribution. Some schools have prepared summary reports for distribution to the general public and placed copies of the full report(s) in the central office, schools, and community libraries.

8.0 PRESENT REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

The presentation of the final report to the Board of Education before it has been shared and discussed with the staff may create problems in some school systems. It can also be a problem if the report, or sections of the report, are reported in the press before presented to the Board! This is a delicate situation that should be handled with discretion.

In several cases, the final report was discussed with the staff prior to presentation to the Board with the understanding that it was a confidential professional document until presented to the Board of Education. If this is done, it should be made clear to the staff that this is a sharing and discussion of ideas, not a work session to revise the report the V.T. members have agreed upon.

Board meetings should be held in the school that was visited and a special invitation should be sent to residents of the area. It is best if the V.T. chairperson and other members of the V.T. make the presentation to the Board of Education. In several schools, a photographer took pictures throughout the visit, and these were the hit of the Board presentation.

After the opportunity for Board members to discuss the report with the V.T., it is important that the Board chairperson or Superintendent describe what steps will be taken to follow upon the recommendations made in the report.

9.0 DISCUSS REPORT IN DEPTH WITH PROFESSIONAL STAFF

10.0 PREPARE RESPONSE TO V.T. REPORT

These steps, which may be considered optional, provide an opportunity for the staff to strengthen the cooperative working relationship between the staff and members of the community. The staff might invite V.T. members to meet with them and discuss in more depth the observations and recommendations discussed in the V.T. report. The purpose of such a meeting would be to clarify and develop understanding. Should either or both groups become defensive, or the approach become adversarial, much of the benefit of the meeting might be lost. (Of course, this is true of the total V.T. process.)

Several staffs discussed the V.T. report in depth and prepared a written response that was distributed to the V.T. members. This might be done prior to the in-depth discussion. In many schools, long-term school-community working relationships have developed as a direct result of the V.T. process.

11.0 DEVELOP A PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING (OR RESPONDING TO) RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the V.T. and community must be convinced that the efforts and recommendations of the V.T. will be taken seriously if the goals of community

understanding and support are to be met. This should have been considered carefully during the development of the system-wide plan, and general procedures developed at that time.

If this was done carefully, it is now time for the Board of Education to follow through and demonstrate to the community that the Board does indeed take the process seriously. In Ellington, the Board of Education has developed criteria to assist in the careful analysis of *each* recommendation made by the V.T.s. Each recommendation is placed in one of six categories for action, and this action is made public and discussed at Board of Education meetings.

Annual reports are prepared to show what has been accomplished. Since a different Ellington school has been visited each of the last three years, the report provides information on action taken on V.T. recommendations for each of the three schools—school A, two years after the visit; school B, one year after the visit; and school C, visit concluded in the Spring of 1983—as to how recommendations will be processed. This progress report is updated on a regular basis.

12.0 EVALUATE THE TOTAL PROCESS

At the conclusion of each visit, it is important to analyze the process to determine what was effective and what was not. This information can be used to revise and improve the process. It must be kept in mind, however, that what works in one situation may not work in another, and the process should maintain a certain degree of flexibility. It might be well to survey V.T. members, staff, and Board members as to their perception of the process at various stages, e.g., before, during, and at the conclusion of the visit; and at a specified length of time after the visit.

SUMMARY

It has been demonstrated that the V.T. approach can improve community understanding and support. It builds upon the concept of sharing information and involvement. It can work in your school system, but should be implemented only after careful thought and deliberate planning.

ENDNOTES

¹The model described in this article is drawn from the author's work with visiting teams in eight elementary schools in three Connecticut school systems: West Hartford, 1972-1973; Region 13 (Durham-Middlefield), 1974-1976; and Ellington, 1980-1983. Much of the model has evolved from the process as developed in West Hartford by their Superintendent, Charles O. Richter.

²Materials prepared for visiting committees. West Hartford Public Schools, West Hartford, CT, 1972.

³Annual Report, 1973. Regional School District 13, Durham-Middlefield, CT (p. 9).

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PARADIGMATIC CONTEXTS OF MODELS OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING

Many definitions of the planning process may be extrapolated from the literature (Lynch & Tason, 1984). These include:

- a. Planning is a systematic process of making rational/technical choice (Mannheim, 1949; Simon, 1960; Dror, 1968; OECD, 1980);
- b. Planning is a matrix of interdependent and sequential series of systematically related decisions (Churchman, 1971);
- c. Planning is a process of "constructing maps of time, space and causality in new settings" (Inbar, 1985, p. 20);
- d. Planning is any goal-oriented process for selecting among a number of choices;
- e. Planning is a process controlled by politics and the exercise of power;
- f. Planning is a process of coordinating the activities of others;
- g. Planning is an interactive process with decisions reached as the result of dialogue (Friedmann, 1973; McGinn & Warwick, 1980); and
- h. Planning is essentially a process of education or learning.

Even this partial list of definitions allows a wide range of assumptions about planning either as a descriptive or normative process. Quite different purposes, actors, and methodologies are implied suggesting that the definitions are imbedded in contrasting social theories or paradigms. However, typically these conceptual distinctions have not been elaborated either in the planning literature in general or in the educational planning literature in particular. The implicit proposition in this paper is that a recognition of paradigmatic diversity and the contribution multiple paradigms can bring to planning greatly enriches both theory and practice. This exploratory analysis proceeds by first grouping planning definitions into two general models of educational planning and associating these with hard systems and soft systems thinking. The theoretical and paradigmatic roots of these conceptualizations will then be examined. Finally, attention will focus on the way in which the interpretive/humanist paradigm can enlighten certain kinds of educational planning.

The cited definitions suggest two broad groupings of conceptualizations of planning. Following the terminology common in planning, literature definitions 1, 2, and 3 (and possibly 4) could be labelled rational/technical, and definitions 5 through 8 probably would be characterized as interactive/transactional. Rational/technical models depict the planning process as consisting of a series of procedures in which planners attempt to: identify the significant problems, needs and goals; translate major goals into objectives and targets; describe alternative courses of action to achieve targets; specify the costs and benefits of each

alternative; select the optimal course of action; combine the chosen courses of action into a plan (or plans); translate the plan into operational programs and projects; and implement and evaluate each program and project.

Rational/technical models of planning assume agreement on goals and reflect a faith in the available techniques or technology to translate targets into programs of action (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1970). Advances in recent years in management sciences, statistical theory, information theory, decision theory, and new computer assisted programming techniques have reinforced the status of rational/technical models (Davis, 1980). Under these models, the planner is viewed as a technical analyst, applied researcher, or scientific manager.

Rational/technical models draw extensively from the methodology of systems analysis and the assumption of "hard systems thinking." Systems analysis as popularized in the post World War II period includes the following essential elements:

- a) an objective or objectives which decision makers desire to accomplish;
- b) alternative techniques or systems by which the objective may be accomplished;
- c) the costs or resources required by each system;
- d) a mathematical model or set of equations representing the interdependence of the objectives, the techniques, the environment and the resources; and
- e) an objective criterion for making the optimal choice.

The similarity between the conceptualization of systems analysis and the rational technical model of planning is readily apparent. Systems analysis or hard systems thinking derives largely from the work of control and communication engineers who sought to devise an approach and set of techniques for addressing a range of technical, largely engineering, problems in World War II. Hard systems thinking has been called the "triumphant working out of the principle offered by Descartes"—namely, that complex situations and problems may be divided into separate parts which may be treated one by one. Checkland (1978) notes:

The belief that real world problems can be formulated in this way is the distinguishing characteristic of all 'hard' systems thinking—this belief has been strong, which explains why the literature of systems methodology has been insisting since the 1950s that at the start of a systems study it is necessary to define the need, the aims to be achieved, the systems which when engineered will meet the need, the mission to be accomplished, etc. (p. 107)

Hard systems thinking then can be traced to systems analysis, systems engineering, and operations research. Its disciplinary heritage is in the natural sciences and technology. When attempts were made to associate it with the broader social arena, hard systems thinking quite naturally drew extensively from economics, the "hardest" of the social sciences. At least some economists were comfortable in the world of mathematical formulas and their planning models of education, and other social sectors were often hardly distinguishable from models of production designed by engineers.

Examples of rational/technical models which have attempted to employ assumptions of hard systems thinking include, among others: most approaches to comprehensive and strategic educational planning sponsored by national governments and international organizations; the so-called manpower, social demand and cost-benefit approaches; resource allocation planning at the institutional level, and physical plant and space planning.

In contrast, the interactive/transactional models depict the planning process in a much less structured way. These models emphasize the importance of information exchange, the political nature of decision making, and the dynamic nature of the interaction of individuals and systems with their environment. Some models in this category go further and accept the subjective nature of knowledge and insight. Thus, within this broad classification, planning is conceptualized as an attempt to mediate between knowledge and action within the context of an uncertain future and incomplete understanding of the present. Planning is not a series of sequential, logically associated procedures but rather, it proceeds as a continual, process of interaction-interpretation-decision-further interaction-reinterpretation, etc. Within these models, the planner is viewed as a negotiator, human relations specialist, or because of political and power concerns, a "jungle-fighter."

Interactive/transactional models of planning may be associated with "soft systems thinking," an explicit attempt to modify and extend systems analytic techniques beyond engineering and technical concerns to a wider range of human problems. Distinguishing soft from hard systems approaches reflects the efforts in recent years of scholars and planners to demonstrate that the traditional approaches of systems analysis, with their strong overtones of social engineering, were invalid in considering open systems operating in the social world.

The applicability of hard systems thinking would appear to be limited to situations where goals are clear and agreed upon and to problems whose structure allow systematic study and offer the potential of recognized solutions. Clearly, such structures do not apply to many social problems including many pertaining to education. Soft systems thinking, by contrast, recognizes a distinction between technical and social problems. Checkland (1981) comments:

'Soft' systems methodology provides a structured way of tackling ill-structured problems without imposing on them either the means-end dichotomy of 'hard' methodology or, indeed, any other assertive scheme of this kind. (p. 7)

Education has been described as an open, "loosely coupled," permeable, human, system which generates conditions and problems which have been characterized as complex, "squishy," ill-structured, and "wicked." Educational goals are frequently not clear and, beyond the level of vague abstractions, rarely agreed upon by the various constituents. Educational systems, then, tend to be soft systems, and when addressing many educational questions, educational planners need to reflect soft systems thinking. Examples of approaches to educational planning which tend toward interactive/transactional models include: political systems approaches, participatory attempts at educational planning, transactive planning (Friedman, 1980), and certain organizational development attempts at organizational improvement.

A TYPOLOGY OF SOCIAL PARADIGMS

Burrell and Morgan (1979) create a set of interrelated paradigms within which a range of social theories is reviewed. Developed as a schema for comparing approaches to organizational analysis, this typology of "metatheoretical paradigms" is useful for distinguishing frames of reference and assumptions implicit in models of educational planning, and through such refinement of existing models, for laying the groundwork for new planning practices. The term "paradigm" here refers to a broad world view or view of social reality. The four paradigms identified below thus represent four alternative views of social reality. Social theories and their derivative educational planning models have a shared world view and thus may be grouped together within a particular paradigm.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Morgan (1980) compare the four paradigms along two axes: the ends of the vertical axis are labelled "sociology of regulation" and "sociology of radical change;" the ends of the horizontal axis are labelled "objective" and "subjective." Thus the radical humanist and radical structuralist paradigms tend toward "sociology of radical change;" in contrast with the interpretive and functionalist paradigms tend toward the "sociology of regulation." On the "objective-subjective" axis, the radical structuralist and functionalist paradigms tend toward the former while the radical humanist and interpretive paradigms tend toward the latter. Since the labelling of the axes may itself be a reflection of paradigmatic bias, a variety of identifications of the dimensions is possible. The four paradigms are further defined below.



The functionalist paradigm tends to explain social phenomena by their systemic relations to other phenomena without seeking original causes. Social change takes place largely through structural differentiation and specialization, and all modern societies are assumed to have similar social structures. This paradigm has its roots in the structural-functionalist movement in Western social science and has been linked to positivist epistemology and the quest for objective science. As elaborated by such scholars as Parsons (1951, 1956, 1966) and Merton (1957), functionalism became the mainstream orientation of American social scientists in most of the twentieth century. This paradigm, as Morgan (1980) explains,

is based upon the assumption that society has a systemic character oriented to produce an ordered and regulated state of affairs. The ontological assumptions encourage a belief in the possibility of an objective and value-free social science in which the scientist is distanced from the scene. The functional perspective is primarily regulative and pragmatic in its basic orientation, concerned with understanding society in a way which generates useful empirical knowledge. (p. 606)

The interpretive paradigm, like the functionalist paradigm, recognized a fundamental pattern and order present in the social world; however, society has no existence separate from its members (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Morgan, 1983). As Morgan (1980) elaborates, the interpretative paradigm assumes that a generalizable, objective social science is unattainable:

. . . what passes as social reality does not exist in any concrete sense, but is the product of the subjective and inter-subjective experience of individuals. Society is understood from the standpoint of the participant in action rather than the observer. The interpretive social theorist attempts to understand the process through which shared multiple realities arise, are sustained, and are changed. (p. 612)

The paradigm has these characteristics (Morgan & Burrell, 1979): the frame of reference is the participant, not the observer; the social world is seen as an emergent social process created by the individuals concerned; it assumes that the world of human affairs is cohesive, ordered, integrated; problems of conflict, domination, contradiction, potentiality, and change play little part in these theorists' framework; and whether organizations exist in anything but a conceptual sense is questioned.

The radical structuralist paradigm views structural characteristics as the consequence of struggles for power and dominance between competing groups. Tensions and contradictions between components of the society are assumed to be always present and, when sufficiently intense, set the stage for radical change. Burrell and Morgan (1979) describe this paradigm as rooted in a materialist view of the natural and social world:

It is based upon an ontology which emphasizes the hard and concrete nature of the reality which exists outside the minds of men. . . . Radical structuralism is a view which focuses upon the essentially conflictual nature of social affairs and the fundamental process of change which this generates. (p. 327).

Thus, radical structuralism emphasizes structural conflict and is committed to radical change. Contradictions, deprivation, persistent class and group conflicts, and unequal power relationships mean that many contemporary societies will undergo political and economic crises. Out of such crises can evolve new social structures and more equitable social conditions. These changes are requisite to the emancipation of individuals and the construction of a just society.

The radical humanist paradigm is defined by its concern with explaining radical change from a subjectivist standpoint. Radical humanism has much in common with the interpretive paradigm in that it examines the social world from a perspective which tends to be "nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). However, unlike the interpretive paradigm, recognition is given to the importance of radical transformations in transcending the limitations of existing social arrangements. One of the most basic notions underlying this paradigm is that,

the consciousness of man is dominated by the ideological superstructures with which he interacts, and that these drive a cognitive wedge between himself and his true consciousness. This wedge is the wedge of 'alienation' or 'false consciousness,' which inhibits or prevents true human fulfillment. The major concern for

theorists approaching the human predicament in these terms is with release from the constraints which existing social arrangements place upon human development. (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 22)

Radical humanism assumes that individuals create and sustain the world in which they live and is concerned with a critique of this subjective world. It views society as alienating and is concerned with ways in which human beings may transcend the psycho-cultural bonds which tie them to existing social patterns and thus allow them to realize their full potential. Radical humanism shares with radical structuralism an emphasis on radical change, modes of domination, emancipation, deprivation, and potentiality. Although it recognizes structural factors, it does not share the objectivist views of structural conflict and contradiction which characterize the radical structuralist paradigm. Development, to radical humanists, is the process of freeing the human consciousness and facilitating the growth of human potentialities.

While it is quite conceivable to associate each of the four paradigms with conceptualizations of planning, the concern here is primarily with the distinctions implied along the objective-subjective dimension which highlight the differences in hard and soft systems thinking. Thus, with due apologies to Burrell and Morgan, the four paradigms are collapsed into two, distinguished by a tendency toward objectivity or subjectivity. The two resulting paradigms may therefore be labelled the interpretive/humanist paradigm and the functional/structuralist paradigm.

PARADIGMS AND MODELS OF PLANNING

It is important to point out that such a scheme is not merely a classificatory device which facilitates the organization of large amounts of disparate research and scholarship (Collins, 1985). This classification allows comparisons and generalizations and in the process surfaces hypotheses and propositions to be examined. A major purpose is to reveal similarities and contradictions in assumptions underlying social theory and the implicit commitments of the planner, a requisite for building planning theory and understanding planning practice. The planning model forms the rules of the game in making planning decisions. The images of the social world implied by the planning model may not be readily apparent nor easily verbalized but still be crucially significant in giving meaning to the activity of planning. Thus, the planner as scientist, manager, or educator: "may be guided by unpostulated and unlabelled assumptions about what constitutes fact *par excellence* and how people make sense out of the disparate events of their social world" (Popkewitz, 1984, p. 35).

Clearly, "hard systems thinking" and its derivative the rational/technical planning models nestle comfortably within the functionalist/structuralist paradigm. Systems analysis and social systems theory developed through attempts to apply the models of the natural sciences and engineering (whose main purpose is to facilitate prediction and control) to analysis of human affairs (Toffler, 1971). The social world and organizations within it are seen as real and may be subjected to study by scientific methods (Kuhn, 1970). The major concern of hard systems thinking and rational/technical models is to choose the best or optimal decision among alternatives. Theories of scientific management, most empirical approaches to the

study of organizations, and much of administrative theory are congruent with functionalism.

When seen within a functionalist paradigm, three key assumptions implicit in rational/technical planning are brought to light:

1. The knowledge necessary for planning is objective, cumulative and capable of being expressed in codified, abstract language;
2. Planning with its flow charts and engineering language suggests that a neutral "scientific" process is available which provides an algorithm for responsive, efficient change; and
3. Planning models and methods have universal applicability or at least require little situational adaptation.

Congruent with the above assumptions are the following corollaries:

1. Change may be managed, and planning may be viewed as the management of change;
2. Planning becomes the prerogative of professionals or experts who possess sufficient technical knowledge to control change; and
3. The planner as a "change agent" may work either inside or outside the system but always for the purpose of directing or manipulating change.

Debate continues as to whether soft systems thinking is merely a variant of functionalist analysis or if it represents a counter movement (Prevost, 1976; Naughton, 1979; Mingers, 1984). Although classification is of little value in itself, examining a methodology or conceptualization within a theoretical context allows possibilities for its further development or refinement.

The argument here is that soft systems thinking, the approach necessary in much of educational planning, cannot be adequately grounded intellectually in the functionalist tradition. In open, human systems, judgments are enlightened by unique individual experiences, and indeed have little meaning outside such experiences. Judgments, then, are interpretations mixing what functionalists would distinguish as attitude and observation, value and fact. The context or environment of social problems in the social world is too indefinite to allow easy generalizations, much less the formation of valid laws.

In addition to planners, scholars in educational evaluation are beginning to recognize the relevance of the interpretive paradigm to their work. Weiss (1979) describes a number of models of research utilization in the social sciences. She points out the inadequacies of such functionalist approaches as the R & D model and the problemsolving model in addressing real world situations. She observes: "Knowledge does not readily lend itself to conversion into replicable technologies, either material or social. . . . Researchers have little to contribute when there exists no consensus of goals" (p. 427). Weiss also distinguishes the *interactive model* (with emphasis on dialogue of researchers and decision makers), the *political model* (research is part of political battles), and the *enlightenment model* (research offers few specific findings but its generalizations and orientations 'percolate' through informed publics). Introduction of *interaction*, *political process* and *enlightenment* into evaluation models suggests a recognition of the importance of distinguishing between soft systems thinking and hard systems thinking. However, these models in and of themselves do not necessarily remove evaluation or decision making from the functionalist paradigm. Some scholars,

such as Popkewitz (1984), however, go beyond the criticism of Weiss to call for a clear shift in paradigm.

Soft systems thinking emanates from a world view congruent with the interpretive/humanist paradigm. Recognition of the importance of individual perception, the inconstancy of human behavior, the crucial but variant nature of social contexts removes soft systems thinking from the functionalist/structuralist paradigm.

In relating soft systems thinking to a theory of social reality, Checkland (1980) acknowledges the contributions of Vickers (1965) who uses the term *appreciative system*. (Vickers, in turn, borrows the concept from Boulding, 1961). Vickers refers to appreciation as a "mental process" which:

manifests itself in the exercise through time of mutually related judgments or reality and value. These appreciative judgments . . . largely implicit and unconscious . . . condition what events and relations they [those judging] will regard as relevant . . . welcome or unwelcome, important or unimportant, demanding or not demanding action or concerns by them. (p. 67)

Friedmann (1978), whose early writings on planning practice and theory supported rational models, more recently has agreed that interactive and trans-active approaches are more meaningful in the real world. He believes that the difference between objective and subjective knowledge is "dubious" and touts the superiority of knowledge derived from social practice. Still, he admits that the technical (technocracy) view of producing knowledge continues to prevail. He repeats a question attributed to Hudson: "What will it take to make an epistemology of social practice possible in the context of social construction?"

Mingers (1980) notes the subjectivist characteristics of soft systems thinking but argues that it has more in common with the critical theory of Habermas. (In the scheme of Burrell and Morgan, the tradition of critical theory is mostly located in the radical humanism quadrant but is close to the intersection of all four paradigms.) In laying the groundwork for attempting to build an encompassing theory of human action, Habermas splits human behavior into two conceptual divisions characterized by work and interaction. The former represents rational choices governed by technical rules which, in turn, are driven by ends or goals. There are assumed to be empirically testable propositions linking means to ends. This type of behavior is designated "purposive-rational action" and has been legitimated historically by positivist or "normal science" (Kuhn, 1970). Clearly in terms of our analysis, purposive rational action may be associated with the functionalist paradigm and provides a historical and explanatory context for hard systems problem solving and rational/technical planning. The second division of behavior characterized by interaction, is called "communicative action" by Habermas (1971). As the term suggests, communicative action is concerned with language or, more broadly symbolic, interaction between people. Communicative action is governed by "consensual norms and expectations expressed in intersubjective language and acquired through the internalization of role expectations" (Mingers, 1980, p. 41).

To counter the danger of purposive-rational action leading to the complete dominance of its own values, i.e., efficiency and control, Habermas (1970) like Vickers (1981) suggests that enlightened individuals can, through communication, achieve a level of *rational* consensus. Thus language, because it is based on "consensual, intersubjective expectations," carries the implicit building blocks for consensus of values as people attempt to identify and solve their own problems.

Soft systems thinking shares with critical theory the basic criticisms of hard systems analysis. Critical theory contributes to soft systems thinking by reinforcing the concern for avoiding manipulation, by seeking authentic involvement of people, and by enabling people to judge the effects of decisions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Hard systems thinking with its conceptualization of planning decisions as an algorithmic process and its link to a functionalist view of social reality has relevance to a limited number of educational problems. However, if a broad view of this model is taken, its utility and pertinence to selected educational planning questions can be defended. Questions of space allocation, physical plant construction, cost analyses, transportation assessments, enrollment forecasting, and so forth, can with certain assumptions be melded into a form subjectable to the constraints of technical rationality and optimization.

Educational questions pertaining to goals, needs, equity, and quality, however, must be associated with soft systems thinking and its interpretivist and relativist overtones. All comprehensive planning and much strategic planning fall within this category. Educational policy planning, curriculum planning, and even resource planning have soft characteristics.

Educational planning in such softer areas resists being molded into a purposive-rational process. Nor are attempts "to be as rational as possible" helpful. The latter view says in effect that although the assumptions and techniques of the rational/technical model are recognized as inappropriate, the only hope of even partial success is to proceed as if they were appropriate. This view may lead to attempts at transforming real world practical problems into questions for which there are unambivalent technical answers. The choice to "try harder" rather than "try something else" not only represents faulty reasoning but is likely to lead to confusion, frustration, and possibly, rejection of planning as useful in the change process.

Rational/technical models of educational planning are most appropriate where there exists a strong consensus on the nature of the problem or situation. Interpretive/transactional models of educational planning allow multiple interpretations of phenomena or problems and yet hold out the possibility of construction of consensus. The introduction of a major curriculum change, for example: (1) may become an economic problem because of questions of resource allocation; (2) may become a moral or religious issue over questions of content; (3) may become a political, union problem because of demands on teachers' time and autonomy; or (4) may be recognized as including all of these problems. Lack of consensus is accepted under the interpretive/transactional models. Indeed even conflict and confrontation are to be welcomed if these clarify decision options, thereby allowing planners and policy makers to reflect on differing interpretations,

attempt a creative synthesis of opposing views, or design flexible plans adaptable to the contexts in which they will be implemented.

In considering the ways in which the interpretive/humanist paradigm can contribute to educational planning, a distinction made by Mingers (1984) is useful. Mingers examines a "strong" and a "weak" version of subjectivism and finds the former "logically inconsistent." In brief, the strong version: ". . . denies the possibility of objective knowledge of social structure while weak subjectivism, although emphasizing the subject, implicitly accepts extra-individual structures" (p. 91). If social reality consists only of individual constructions and all such constructions are equally valid, then little room exists for intentional planning. However, with acceptance of the intersubjectivity of knowledge, ideas and actions have meaning within the context of an intersubjective structure. Moreover, as suggested by critical theory, there is the possibility of objective analysis and comparison of subjective meanings.

Awareness and understanding of educational phenomena depend upon or, at least are extended by intersubjective communication and experience. Intersubjective learning can clarify the meaning of educational traditions and elucidate frames of reference of educators and educational planners. To be truly concerned with educational reality, educational planning must be concerned with the specific meanings, actions, and structures of relevance to people involved in or thinking about education. Popkewitz (1984) observes: "What is real and valid is so because of mutual agreement by those who participate" (p. 42). Thus, for example, achievement scores in school or indeed any index of educational quality is given meaning by the consensual norms of the situation, that is, by social agreement within the context of educational practice.

Green (1980) recognizes the intersubjectivity of meaning when he observes that educational goals frequently serve not as hard and fast measures of success but as indications of failure agreed upon at a particular time in a particular social context: "It is their (goal) function to tell us what we are to count as relevant in advancing the judgment that things have gotten intolerably bad" (p. 31). "Intolerably bad" becomes defined intersubjectively by particular sets of clientele, e.g., parents, citizens, teachers, the state, in specific temporal, social, economic and ideological contexts. ✓

Advancement in the theory and practice of educational planning requires going beyond the assumptions of externally imposed models to capture the pertinent knowledge imbedded in educational practice and uncover the choices and decisions which structure change. (For one of a host of possible examples of how practice illuminates planning, see Walter, 1983). These understandings in turn require interpretation of shared meanings and identification of rules which govern peoples' behavior and the use of information. Concurrently, recognition must be given to the importance of identifying ideological commitments and clarifying conditions for communication. The focus on the significance of mining the insights to be found in practice and context clearly emerges as a major way in which the interpretive/humanist paradigm enriches the soft side of educational planning. ✓

However, a caveat may be in order. Attention to dialogue and contextual meanings does not necessarily justify avoidance of action. What is suggested, rather, is an alternative view of planning success which recognized that the process

may well result only in a clarification of the lack of agreement and a redefinition of the situation in question. Indeed, such planning may highlight the need to continue an interactive, learning process. Yet, this process does not necessarily get us closer to the original policy or goal because the situation or problem is continuously redefined and in light of this redefinition earlier proposals for policy may no longer be defensible. Success, then, may be understood not only as achieving the original targets but as a reshaping of the debate.

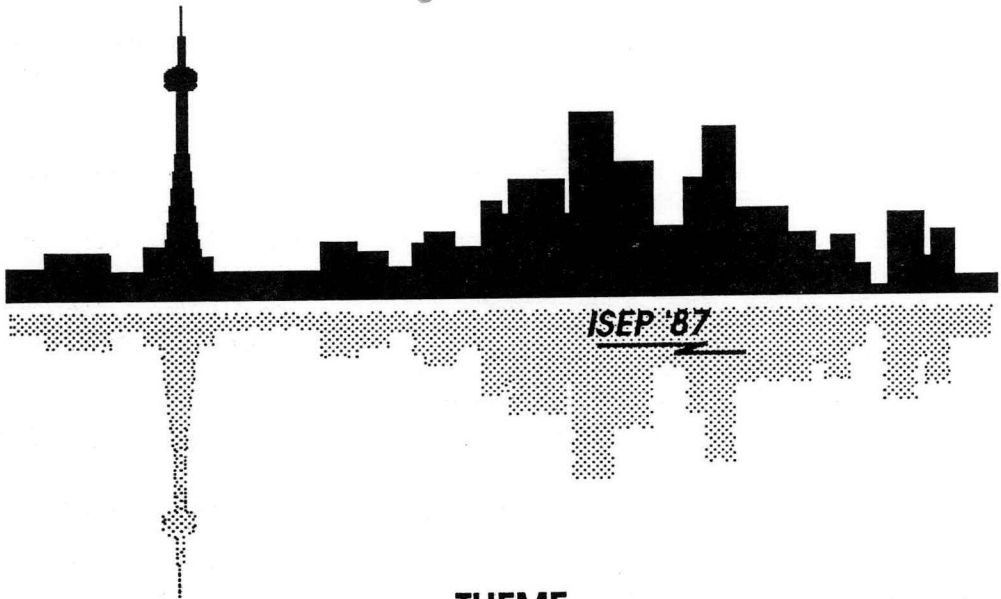
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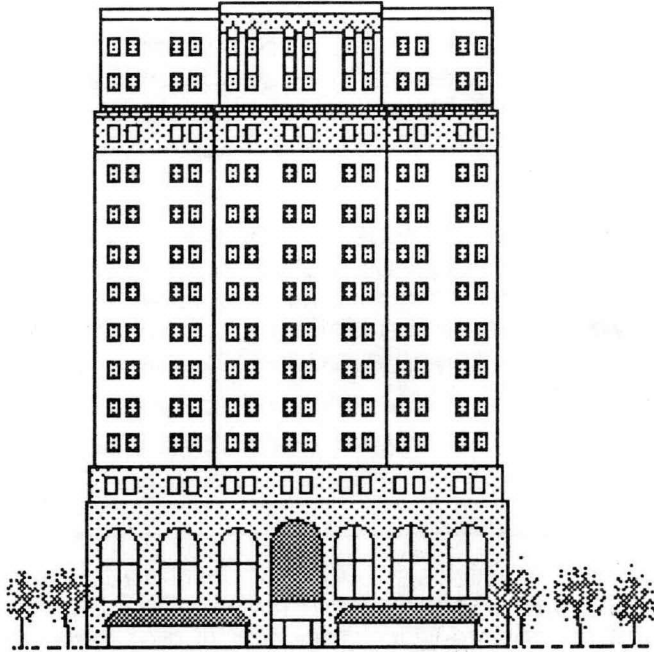
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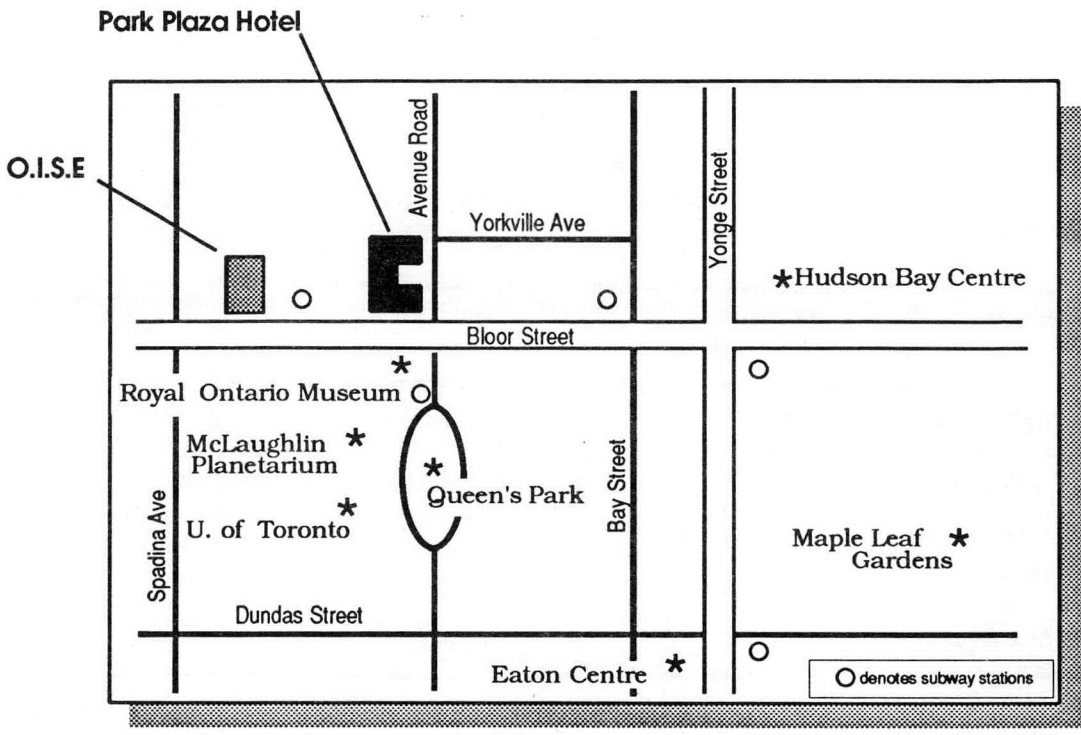


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Proposals for papers, symposia and workshops for the ISEP '87 Conference are now being accepted. Creative and innovative presentations are encouraged on planning for elementary, secondary, higher and special education. While presentations that relate to the theme of this year's conference are especially welcome, any papers of high quality that are of potential interest to the conference participants will be given serious consideration. Participants are invited to focus on international, national, state/provincial or local planning issues.

Please see the section on "Proposal Format" for details of what to include in your submitted abstract.

Proposal Format

Most of the conference sessions will be 90 minutes long. You may propose a symposium or workshop to fill an entire session or a paper that can be presented in 10-15 minutes followed by a 5-15 minute discussion period. Three to five papers will be presented in each session. You are encouraged to ensure that we receive your proposal by **August 14, 1987**. The ISEP '87 organizing committee will then notify you of your paper's acceptance. After notification, please send in your completed manuscript by **September 11, 1987**. All manuscripts received by this date will be duplicated for distribution at the expense of the organizing committee.

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Articles preferred for inclusion are reports of empirical research, expository writings including analyses of topical problems, or anecdotal accounts. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed. The following criteria have been established for the submission of manuscripts:

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4. Double spacing is to be used between all lines.
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6. Each manuscript must be submitted in triplicate, one copy of which should be the original.
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