
INTRODUCTION

I lived briefly in southern Maine, long enough to become familiar with some of the folk tales of New England. One of these stories is of a traveler, hopelessly lost on the back roads of Maine. He stops at the house of an old woodsman who is sitting on his porch and asks directions. The old man begins telling the traveler directions several times, but stops each time midway through and begins again with a different set of directions. Finally, as the traveler becomes more exasperated, the old man strokes his chin thoughtfully and says, “Come to think of it, you can’t get there from here.”

In many ways school restructuring is an attempt to get “there” from “here.” Many states, as well as school districts and individual schools, are pursuing different paths toward the goal of a fundamentally redesigned public educational system. Some paths are proving to be more fruitful than others. What is becoming clear is that there is no one route all schools will follow; there is not one “road” to restructuring. Reports from the field indicate schools and school districts are employing a profusion of strategies and approaches, many of which they identify as restructuring.

This book explores the paths down which states, districts, and schools are traveling. These paths suggest a road map to restructuring, an overall framework of organizational change that results in educational redesign.

PURPOSES AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS BOOK

A tremendous amount has been written about school restructuring during the past half-dozen years. Writers and researchers have investigated, discussed, and debated the need and rationale for change in public education, the various strategies being attempted, their relative effectiveness, and the difficulty of bringing about change in public schools.

This wealth of information has not been easily available to practitioners. It is widely dispersed in journals, papers, and unpublished, hard-

to-find documents. When school people begin to consider restructuring, it is not easy for them to assemble the resources that might aid their discussions and decisions.

This book is designed to help address this need, at least in part. It is an attempt to assemble many of the salient works on school restructuring that have appeared in print since discussions on the topic began in earnest in the mid-1980s. But this book goes beyond simply summarizing the writing in this area. Its goal is to provide a conceptual framework within which restructuring activities and processes can be considered; to provoke thinking, discussion, and questions regarding restructuring; and to enable readers to go beyond this text to many other sources that will deepen their understanding of ideas presented here.

The book draws from more than 600 sources across a wide spectrum of perspectives and beliefs regarding restructuring. It incorporates and builds upon several of my earlier works on this topic,* along with information I gleaned from discussions and interviews with practitioners. Additional insights have come from my role as a school-restructuring consultant, as a site facilitator for nine schools participating in a U.S. Department of Education grant designed to enable schools to take the “next step” in restructuring, and more recently as director of a project that works with thirty high schools to develop proficiency-based college admission standards for Oregon’s public colleges and universities.

This book provides a picture of many of the trends and issues in school restructuring and attempts to place these issues into a context that helps explain where schools have come from and where they might be going. The book is designed to serve as a tool to help faculties develop their vision of school restructuring and their strategies for pursuing the process of restructuring. It might also be used profitably as a resource for principals, administrators, and boards of education who are trying to understand in greater detail this concept and its implications.

My goal in writing this book is to help educators, community members, and policy-makers understand more clearly why many educators are trying to restructure education, what people may mean when they talk about restructuring, what a few select schools are doing, and how the process of attempting fundamental change in education is being played out. I try to avoid being a cheerleader or cynic. This choice is left to the reader. Rather, I hope that this book will enable the reader to have a more informed opinion on school restructuring, and to be more aware of the causes, issues, techniques, and strategies that are associated with this movement.

* See, for example: D. Conley (March and September 1991); Conley, Dunlap, and Goldman (1992); Goldman, Dunlap, and Conley (1993).

The scope of the book is both a strength and a weakness. Because it deals with all the activities being labeled as restructuring, along with the process of restructuring, I have had to exclude many important sources. Others may be oversimplified or given inadequate presentation. A reader with a high degree of expertise in one of the dimensions of restructuring might take issue with the conclusions reached about the relative importance of particular techniques or trends within that dimension, or with the omission of a particularly important or significant source.

These reactions would be justified. I have made a series of conscious decisions to trade off depth for breadth in many cases. I hope to have avoided superficial treatment of key issues and to have captured the main or representative points of view for all the dimensions discussed. Although I have limited the depth of investigation of each topic, the reference list will direct the reader to sources that could serve as the foundation for a more thorough investigation of topics of particular personal interest.

Rather than try to write the definitive book on all aspects of educational restructuring, I have designed this book to be an accessible, user-friendly guidebook or “roadmap” to allow the reader to develop a better understanding of restructuring from a “big picture” perspective.

This book also does not attempt to demonstrate or prove the effectiveness of the various techniques being prescribed under the rubric of restructuring. When appropriate, I cite or discuss relevant research as it relates to a particular dimension or activity. However, this is not a review of the research in the formal sense. It is an exploration and systematic analysis of the literature on a number of closely related topics designed to help identify and label the key issues and ideas embedded within the topics being examined.

This is not a book about *school* restructuring alone. It considers changes that are occurring in central offices, boards of education, state departments of education, and the federal role in education. At the same time, much of the information presented about restructuring strategies is focused at the level of the individual school site. The school site, while the nexus for restructuring, does not exist in a vacuum. For that reason, I also consider the school’s relationship to other levels of organization that have an impact on its ability to reshape itself.

Is this book about elementary, middle level, or high school restructuring? Is it about urban, suburban, or rural schools? While I offer many examples from secondary schools, much, perhaps most, of what is discussed here applies to all levels of education. For that reason I make no systematic attempt to divide the text into sections addressing differ-

ent grade levels. While the unique challenges and needs of urban and rural schools are not addressed separately, I do attempt to consider the impact many of these issues have upon these schools. To address these distinctions adequately would require another book. Once again, this book strives to identify common patterns and themes that might have implications for educators regardless of the location of their school.

Finally, two topics are not addressed directly as dimensions of restructuring but may be thought of as overlays to all dimensions. These are multiculturalism and the presence of a caring staff.

The ability of American schools to accommodate and adapt to the increasingly multicultural nature of the student population will ultimately determine the viability of public education and in some important ways the economic and social future of the nation. Although multiculturalism is not included as a separate dimension, I want to stress that this concept will have far-reaching implications for schools.

Decisions made in nearly every area listed among the twelve dimensions of restructuring will be (or should be) influenced by principles of multiculturalism. In that sense it transcends and pervades all the dimensions. Many sections of the book argue for enhanced success for all learners and other manifestations of the concept of equity that implies that all students will be able to succeed in public schools. Underlying these points is the assumption that enhanced student learning for all is unlikely to occur in the absence of a truly multicultural school program and community, one that incorporates and respects the culture, history, beliefs, and values of diverse groups present in the school community and American society.

The other topic that is important but not stated explicitly elsewhere is the notion that effective schools are invariably staffed with competent, caring teachers and other adults who work with children. Let it be noted that almost none of the activities discussed on the coming pages will be possible without highly trained, dedicated, caring people in schools. Let it also be noted that it is not enough simply to hire the best people and let them go their own way. The organizational context must support them. Much of this book is about how the organizational context can support competent, caring staff.

DIFFICULTY OF DESCRIBING RESTRUCTURING

What is it possible to say about restructuring? What is it? How is it interpreted? How many schools are involved in it? How is it being put

into practice in schools? No one answer provides an adequate response to these questions, in part because restructuring is a dynamic, evolving concept that means many things to many people. Newmann (1991b) highlights the difficulty of defining this term and suggests some of the term's relative advantages and disadvantages:

Restructuring joins a lexicon of other memorable slogans in the history of educational reform (e.g., back to basics, community control, effective schools, choice, cultural literacy). Much of a slogan's appeal rests in its capacity to embrace multiple meanings that draw diverse constituencies together in an apparently common cause. While a slogan galvanizes attention and energy, thus offering new possibilities for action, its ambiguity brings the risk that energy will be dissipated in scattered, and even contradictory, directions. The danger here lies not in multiple meanings and approaches, but in the failure to clarify the means and ends of different approaches to "structural" change. (p. 1)

In attempting to describe restructuring, writers face a chicken-and-egg dilemma: Should they use the best evidence available to discern patterns that are fluid and still emerging, knowing that these will be subject to constant revision? Or should they wait until there is an adequate research base that verifies what has occurred and how well it has worked? The second strategy, while of great value, is constrained by the current lack of adequate empirical data from which to draw generalizations that can be substantiated. The first is riskier and more prone to error. It involves making "best guesses" based on reading of the literature, emerging descriptive and case studies, interviews and observations of those who define themselves as being involved in restructuring, and analysis of the actions of policy-makers at all levels. It can have some value in moving forward the discussion and understanding of a concept that has meaning *de facto* for many educators and policy-makers.

This book employs elements of both strategies. The basic outlines of restructuring are relatively clear, what some have called a "new conventional wisdom." Some of the effects of this combination of changes in instruction, curriculum, organizational roles and structures, and power relationships are also being ascertained. However, I do not want the reader to think that every observation offered in the pages that follow can be supported by empirical data. Many are "best guesses" based on a weighing of the evidence from a variety of sources. At the same time, I have made a conscientious effort to ensure that the empirical data that do exist have been referenced where appropriate. I hope that this method of treating the topic of restructuring may serve as a useful contribution to the evolving understanding of this complex, multidimensional phenomenon, and that it might provide some support or assistance both to those considering and those actively engaged in restructuring.

STRUCTURE AND USE OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into four major parts. Part 1, Rationale and Context, presents a historical context within which restructuring can be considered, as well as a summary of the current motivations for and implications of educational restructuring. Part 2, Changing Roles and Responsibilities, examines the evolution of new roles for essentially all the groups that participate in public education directly or indirectly. These first two parts help provide the policy context within which the specific activities of school restructuring that are discussed in part 3 can be better understood. Part 3, Dimensions of Restructuring, explores the concepts of incremental and discontinuous change, then proceeds to an extended discussion of current activities in school restructuring along twelve dimensions. Part 4, Process of Restructuring, captures the lessons being learned about the process of restructuring schools and presents examples of strategies and techniques for restructuring.

I have not designed this book to serve as a cookbook or a “how-to” guide. Quite the contrary. My presupposition is that, for restructuring to succeed, each school must redefine itself individually and allow each teacher, administrator, student, and parent to create a sense of ownership. To help accomplish this, many schools have adapted techniques from strategic planning to develop a *vision* of where they are going. The vision identifies the gap between the school’s current practice and an ideal state. Each individual in the school then interprets and translates the vision personally, determining its implications and meaning.

The process of developing a vision—of creating a framework for discussion of the purposes, values, and methods of education—is enhanced when participants can draw upon a wide range of points of view, conduct their own systematic investigations, and learn from the experiences of others who have attempted to implement their vision. The use of such data helps move the process beyond the personal beliefs of each participant to a broader framework within which personal perspectives can be weighed and analyzed. As I mentioned previously, some common elements are beginning to appear in many of the visions for education’s future.

This book can be used in a variety of ways to facilitate the process of restructuring. It can be divided into sections, with different individuals given the responsibility to read and summarize the key points in each section and identify their implications for the school; or a group may choose to focus upon one section and have all members read and discuss the section. Similarly, a team might analyze a section, identify the key sources cited in that section, and then find and reproduce them for the faculty or committee charged with investigating restructuring options. A

related technique involves assigning source articles to each faculty or committee member and having them prepare a written abstract of the key points in the article. These abstracts might then be copied and assembled in notebook form to allow others easier, quicker access to the literature base on the topic being investigated.

The structure of this book also lends itself to use as a resource book for workshops or courses on restructuring and change in education. Many of the activities described in the previous paragraph might also be used in such settings.

I have also written a companion volume that can help prepare schools for change. It is entitled *Are You Ready to Restructure?* Its content parallels much of what is in this book, but is written in a nontechnical, conversational style. Its twelve chapters can be assigned to a team considering school change. The book does not contain the citations and quotations from sources found in this volume. Each chapter concludes with a series of discussion questions to help the team determine its attitudes toward what has been presented. The goal of the book is to increase readiness for change, or to allow a school to determine it may not be ready, if that is the case. It serves as a necessary and valuable prerequisite to considering the types of specific changes presented in this book.

No matter how this book is employed, its purpose is to provide the reader with the broadest possible overview of this complex, multidimensional topic, and to structure the presentation of information on this topic in a manner that triggers the generation of ideas and the identification by the reader of possible problems and potential solutions. The goal is a better-informed reader who is able to make more sophisticated analyses and reach more thoughtful conclusions on this topic of critical importance to the future of education.

WHAT IS RESTRUCTURING?

In education, the term *restructuring* is as notable for its ambiguity as for its meaning. In the private sector the term has come to mean a process of rapid adaptation prompted by the need to maintain or regain competitiveness. The restructuring process has been called a “radical reaction to product or market changes” (Enderwick 1989, pp. 44-45). Employment and work-assignment patterns within a company are usually disrupted by this process, and layoffs frequently occur as a result. This is not the meaning for this term as educators apply it to change in schools.

In fact, educators often do not distinguish very carefully among possible conceptions of change. It is useful to distinguish among three levels of change occurring sometimes simultaneously in public schools: renewal, reform, and restructuring, what might be referred to as the “three R’s” of change in education. This differentiation can be important, particularly given the fact that almost every school at some point embarks on a change effort of some sort, and that most attempts to change are serious events in the life of schools.

Renewal activities are those that help the organization to do better and/or more efficiently than which it is already doing. Most school-improvement projects fall into this category, as do many of the staff development programs districts offer. Faculties can easily assume that if they are undertaking a number of important renewal activities they are “restructuring,” since these activities take a great deal of energy and are capable of yielding positive results. This type of approach, however, does not cause educators to examine any of their fundamental assumptions or practices, except by implication. For many schools, renewal may be the most appropriate way to proceed. For others, renewal efforts cloaked as restructuring will lead to frustration because the school will not improve nearly as much as is necessary given its current state of functioning, but a great deal of energy will be expended in the process.

Education has a well-documented tradition of improvement efforts that characterize the renewal mindset of change. The pace of systematic improvement has quickened over the past two decades as a research base and models of improvement have been developed (Clarke 1984, Cohen 1982, Edmonds 1982, Joyce 1991, Mortimore and Sammons 1987, Purkey and Smith 1983, Purkey and Degen 1985, Stedman 1987, Vickery 1990). More and more states are requiring systematic school improvement. This increased knowledge base and more prescriptive policy framework may set the stage for schools to attempt more fundamental change. Many models of school improvement help teach educators the skills of data collection and analysis necessary for developing a profile of current practices and identifying areas in need of improvement (Blum and Butler 1985), of determining key shared values and goals (Cook 1988), and of developing the sense of collegiality that allows teachers to talk with one another about practices in their schools (Little 1982). These skills can be important in terms of creating an internal capacity to manage change within the school. Indeed, the existence of this capacity can enable schools to consider change of a more fundamental nature (D. Conley, March 1991; Goldman, Dunlap, and Conley 1993).

Reform-driven activities are those that alter existing procedures, rules, and requirements to enable the organization to adapt the way it

functions to new circumstances or requirements. Two important points help to identify and define reform-oriented efforts: First, changes center on procedural elements, the policies and procedures that determine the basic “rules of the game” for all participants in the system; and, second, the impetus for reform almost always comes from some external force, such as a board of education, a state department of education, or even educational reformers. This external impetus generates internal actions, such as the appointment of committees to examine how current practice would need to be changed to bring the school into compliance with the new expectations or requirements.

Clearly, reform-oriented change cannot be overlooked. In many cases an external “jolt” may be required to jump-start change in schools that are particularly complacent, self-satisfied, or dysfunctional. At the same time, such activities are more likely to produce a new set of rules or procedures than an examination of fundamental practices or assumptions about schooling. Some legislatively mandated programs do have effects on schools, causing them at the very least to talk about current practice. However, many externally originated programs of change for schools do not seem to be very successful, in part because teachers are less likely to develop ownership of the program, or to adapt it to their needs (Berman and McLaughlin 1974, Fullan and Pomfret 1977, Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991, Goldman and Smith 1991). As in the case of renewal activities, schools can devote a great deal of energy to reform-based improvements and never realize that they have not engaged in a consideration of issues related to restructuring the educational environment.

Restructuring activities change fundamental assumptions, practices, and relationships, both within the organization and between the organization and the outside world, in ways that lead to improved and varied student-learning outcomes for essentially all students. The important elements of this definition are the idea that fundamental assumptions must be challenged for change to occur and the emphasis on student learning as the key variable being addressed. *Learning* here refers to performance standards identified and defined by the state, district, and/or school site. The conception of learning contained in the terms *improved* and *varied* is different from that held today by many students, teachers, administrators, parents, and policy-makers. It implies not just short-term memorization of material, but the ability to retain, synthesize, and apply conceptually complex information in meaningful ways, particularly as such application demonstrates understanding of challenging content, intricate concepts and systems, sophisticated learning strategies, real-world problems, and natural phenomena.

The definition highlights the need to consider a variety of levels and ways of learning and to examine all current assumptions, practices, and relationships in the light of a single overarching goal: enhancing students' learning. It also draws attention to the needs of *all* students attending school, not just those students who are currently succeeding.

Far too often, the emphasis on improved student learning becomes obscured when schools define restructuring as changes that focus on or result in enhanced working conditions for adults. While the needs of adults should not be overlooked, anyone engaged in educational redesign or improvement should remember that any change that fails to result in improved student learning doesn't ultimately affect the fundamental purpose of schooling. Clearly, many dimensions of life in schools have an equal impact on the students and adults in the school, and improvements can often be designed to benefit both. Such opportunities can and should be pursued productively and vigorously. However, many of the ideas for school restructuring being considered currently are unlikely to have much impact on the lives of students unless they are explicitly linked with other activities more closely related to student learning.

Many educators have used the general idea of restructuring as a way to create the appearance of change without necessarily confronting the harsh realities that fundamental organizational redesign suggests. These educators seem to say: "I'm all for change—as long as I don't have to do anything differently." This unwillingness to look at underlying assumptions, values, beliefs, practices, and relationships can prevent schools from coming to grips with the profound and disturbing implications of true restructuring.

It seems likely that any district or school that adopts the definition of restructuring presented earlier would find itself in the position of examining almost all its practices. For most schools such self-examination is too difficult and threatening. Fullan (1991) makes this point: "The incentive system of public schools with abstract and unclear goals, lack of performance scrutiny, and a noncompetitive market makes it more profitable politically and bureaucratically to 'innovate' without risking the costs of real change" (p. 28).

Schools should not feel so alone in this respect. In the corporate world as well, companies rarely look very closely at themselves in the absence of some external challenge or threat, which precipitates an internal crisis. The more clear and pressing the threat is, the more fundamental the examination, and the more drastic the response is likely to be. Without the presence of a strong external pressure, schools are going to have a very difficult time remaking themselves voluntarily,

particularly when such a process could involve dislocation, reassignment, and retraining for numerous members of the organization, and is almost assured of engendering community concern in nearly all cases, and active opposition in at least some cases.

THINKING ABOUT CHANGE

Large organizations have a difficult time adapting rapidly. This is true whether we speak of schools or companies. I find it helpful to think of change along a continuum, one that considers the gap between the organization's current state of functioning and conditions in its external environment. If the discrepancy is small, the organization can change slowly and in steps. If the gap is large, a complete overhaul may be called for if the organization is to survive. At one end, the organization is very much in control of the goals and processes of change; at the other, it is not. In this conception of change, the key distinction is the rapidity and magnitude of change the organization faces to realign itself with the demands of a swiftly changing or evolving external environment.

Meyer, Brooks, and Goes (1990) analyzed the strategies organizations employ when confronted by rapid change, or "environmental jolts." They differentiate between *continuous*, or first-order change, and *discontinuous*, or second-order change:

Almost everyone who spends much time thinking about change processes seems to conclude that the world changes in two fundamentally different modes (Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch, 1974). Continuous, or first-order change, occurs within a stable system that itself remains unchanged. Indeed system stability often *requires* frequent first-order change, such as the myriad of small compensatory steering movements that permit a bicyclist to maintain his or her equilibrium. Discontinuous, or second-order change transforms fundamental properties or states of the system. The distinction between first- and second-order change has been likened to that between simple motion and acceleration (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Some compelling examples of social systems plunging from first-order to second-order change are afforded by the sociopolitical upheavals in eastern Europe in late 1989. (p. 94)

Meyer, Brooks, and Goes (1990) state that "as the pace of technological, socioeconomic and regulatory change accelerates, organizations' survival depends increasingly on devising entrepreneurial responses to unforeseen discontinuities" (p. 93).

Meyer and colleagues then offer a conceptual framework for understanding how these changes occur and the responses at individual work sites and at the industry level. They identify four reactive strategies:

1. *Adaptation*: Incremental change within an individual organization
2. *Evolution*: Incremental change within an established industry
3. *Metamorphosis*: Frame-breaking change within an individual organization
4. *Revolution*: Emergence, transformation, and decline of entire industries

They conclude that there is no guarantee organizations will choose a successful or appropriate change strategy. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, San Francisco Bay Area hospitals pursued various strategies in response to decreasing regulation and increasing pressures for cost containment—a pattern of discontinuous change. Historically, protected organizations such as hospitals have had a difficult time responding to second-order change, in part because managers are unprepared for it:

Discontinuous change is enigmatic and paradoxical for managers caught up in it. It breaks the frame in which they have been operating, a frame which they probably have come to take for granted. The events triggering discontinuous changes can appear so inconsequential, and the onset can be so sudden, that managers often are forced to act before they understand of (sic) the consequences of acting. When turbulence subsides a new equilibrium may be achieved that is partly a product of those actions. In this sense, managers in the throes of revolutionary change assume the role of entrepreneurs reinventing both their organizations and their environments. (p. 108)

Educators find themselves in a similar situation. They may well be on the verge of being confronted with sudden, unpredictable jolts, whose significance will be difficult to discern; small, adaptive responses of the type that are associated with school improvement may be disastrous. Whether, or to what degree, educators can assume the role of entrepreneur to reinvent their organizations and environments may be the key unanswered question upon which the fate of the restructuring movement, and perhaps public education in the twenty-first century, hinges.

Cuban (1988), like Meyers and others, uses the same terms to describe the intensity of change: *first-order* and *second-order*. First-order changes improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is being done already “without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles” (p. 342). Second-order changes “alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles” (Fullan 1991, p. 29). Educators have been largely unable to implement second-order change successfully in schools. The difficulty of this type of change should not be underestimated. A more detailed discussion of the problems and challenges associated with fundamental

change in education will be presented in part 4, Process of Restructuring.

Renewal and reform can be thought of as incremental forms of change in most situations and manifestations. They do not disturb organizational features substantially, nor do they necessarily alter the ways adults perform their roles. Restructuring, on the other hand, implies second-order change. However, as will be considered later, many schools that claim to be restructuring appear reluctant in practice to engage in second-order change. They may develop documents replete with the language of such change, but an examination of the nature of their workplace often leads an observer to conclude that little in practice is different, and that those differences that do exist would better be categorized as first-order, rather than second-order, changes. The reader is encouraged to analyze changes occurring in her or his organization and consider whether (or to what degree) they are renewal, reform, or restructuring, and to what degree the organization is conceiving of change as entailing first-order versus second-order alterations of practice and structure.

On a deeper level, the reader must come to grips with her or his organization's basic capacity to change. How capable of change is the organization, even if its existence is threatened? Not all organizations respond successfully even to threats to their survival. The last thirty years of economic transformation in the United States bear witness to this phenomenon, as many companies that were household words no longer exist.