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Empowering Teachers for New Roles in a New Educational System

In-Sook Lee and Charles M. Reigeluth

Introduction

We are currently in the "third wave" era (Toffler, 1981), the post-industrial information age in which change continuously takes place at all levels of society. People are required to be more critical, creative, and multi-dimensional in thinking and decision-making in this age than in any other in human history. Accordingly, education, which is "designed to carry out the specific societal function of nurturing learning and human development" (Banathy, 1991a, p. 31), should be responsible for developing human competence for the new era.

Judging from current literature and the various studies and reports on school restructuring, we note that there is still no consensus, except perhaps on several general features, on the structure of a new educational system. Second, nonetheless, most research and practice imply that *teachers* should be regarded as leaders in every activity for educational change, and that teacher collaboration should be one of the main themes in school restructuring.

Recognizing the fundamentally important roles of teachers in a new educational system, one of the most urgent themes for teachers should be to prepare themselves to fulfill their new roles in the system. This article proposes a *teacher's workshop* as a means for enabling teachers to carry out their new roles in a third-wave educational system.

In order to design the workshop, first of all, we need to identify what should be taught in it. Before identifying and listing the tasks and content, we need to find the gaps between the capabilities required of the teachers in a future educational system and teachers' current capabilities. In order to identify these gaps, we must identify teacher roles and responsibilities in the new system. We can only identify these roles through

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analyzing the future educational system. Such a broad-scope analysis will provide a birds-eye-view of the teachers' new roles and their relationships with other parts of the educational system, as the "LARGEST POSSIBLE PICTURE of education within the LARGEST POSSIBLE SOCIETAL CONTEXT" (Banathy, 1991a, p. 16). Once we find the "should be" roles and responsibilities, we can identify the teachers' current status regarding these roles and responsibilities. This can be done by analyzing teachers in the current educational system.

Analysis of the Future Educational System

I. What Are the Main Features of the New Educational System?

The main features of an educational system that meets the needs of the emerging information society seem likely to depend on the educational goals, the internal environment of a school, the external environment of the school, and the resources available to the school.

A. Educational Goals

The curriculum in the new school system will likely be planned to reflect the nature of change in our global environment (Burns, 1989, p. 33). It will emphasize societal needs, family needs, and student needs. Banathy (1991a, p. 77-79) identifies the new learning goals as focusing on the following five demands:

1. A shift to higher-order learning.
2. The development of competence for the technological age.
3. The ability to manage and shape change.
4. Competence in cooperation.
5. Competence in systems thinking and action.

When examining changes in society, we can identify several more educational goals, including the development of global knowledge, mental and physical health, and effective communication skills.

B. Internal Environment

The internal environment is comprised of the main culture of an individual school interwoven with two aspects: (1) the perspectives of the various subsystems that make up the school, and (2) the structures that make up the school. Strategies for improving a school must take into account the following four features which are emerging in the internal environment of the new system, and which represent an increase in direct teacher involvement in the operation of the school.

1. Site-based decision making. Teachers and their schools will be leading educational restructuring. Schools will have more discretion and authority to make decisions and manage the decisions. This trend is also known as teacher-led school improvement,

teacher leadership, school renewal, and decentralized management.

2. Participatory decision making and partnerships.

Participatory decision making ensures that everyone will be instrumental in schools' instructional and organizational operations. Teachers, of course, will play key roles in making educational policy and performing instructional operations.

3. Collaboration and collegiality. When stakeholders work collaboratively and share responsibilities, they can identify more problems themselves and develop more solutions. Moreover, in this circumstance, people will be more supportive of each other and will work toward common goals.

4. Heterogeneous student grouping. Another internal feature in the new system is the heterogeneous grouping of students. Students are being placed in multi-age groups without regard to grade level but according to interests.

C. External Environment

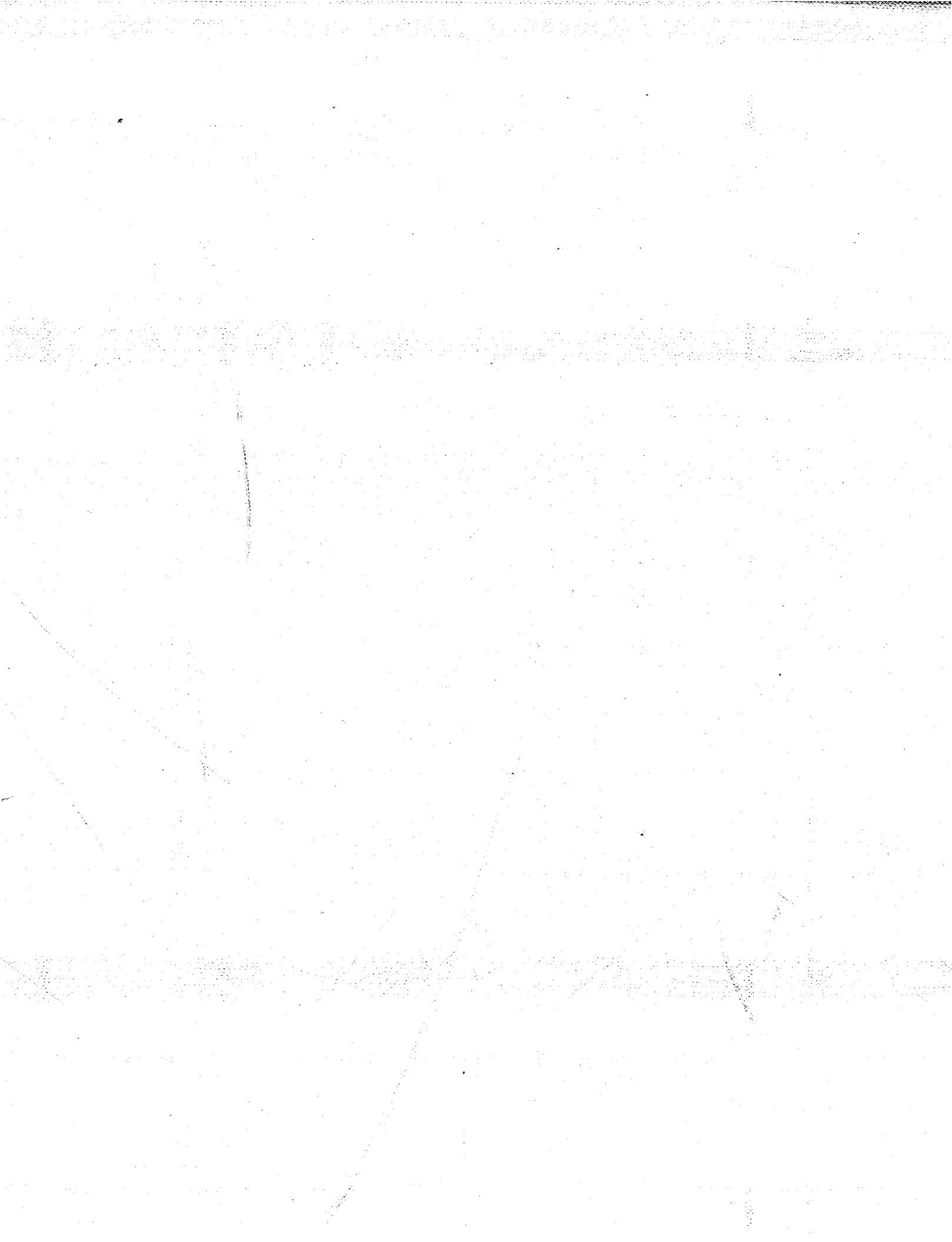
The external environment includes systems outside individual schools, including districts, communities, and the larger society. Based on input from the community and larger society, as well as their own and their students' exploration, teachers should plan the new educational goals and curriculum. This "community-based restructuring" (Norris & Reigeluth, 1991, p. 96) is an important dimension of school restructuring.

More importantly, the relationships between the district and its schools will be fundamentally changed. The district will likely establish certain minimum requirements for development in different subject areas in different age groups (Reigeluth, 1987, p. 12). The districts or states will have to develop measures to assess valued outcomes of performance of individual schools (O'Neil, 1990, p. 6) and coordinate and provide support for evaluating each school.

D. Resources

1. Technological resources. Technological tools will allow teachers to concentrate more on individual students and small groups. Instructional strategies and activities will be provided by using a computer-based integrated learning system (Bailey, 1993), extensive video-based instruction, telecommunications, desktop publishing, hypermedia technology, and other information technologies. Teachers will serve as mentors in learning centers for specific subjects such as math, science, communications, and technology. In addition, teachers will also communicate with students by electronic mail through a local area network.

2. Community resources. The community will be used as a learning center. The community's libraries, museums, theaters, industrial plants, communication and research centers, and various other resources will



provide a variety of out-of-school experiences. Not less important, parental support and participation will be strongly encouraged.

3. Strategic resources. Cooperative learning and experiential activities will be used as instructional strategies. Students will choose their own activities and projects, as well as work on independent and small-group projects and exhibits. This approach implies that teachers will be coaches, and students will be workers and team players. In addition, the instructional time will be used with more flexibility, not with unified and fixed class schedules. Likewise, the team instructional approach will make one-to-one instruction possible. Collaborative work with peer teachers will also be a fundamental strategy.

II. What Is the Teacher's Status in the New Educational System?

In the new educational system, all staff members will likely take instructional and organizational roles (Reigeluth & Garfinkel, 1992; Reigeluth, Norris, & Ryan, 1990). Within this notion, the teacher's fundamental roles can be categorized as facilitation and instruction; counseling and advising students' personal growth planning; course and curriculum development; staff development; resource and technology management; planning, managing, and evaluating finances; and educational decision making and system design.

A. Instructional Roles

Instructional roles will likely include facilitating, advising/counseling, and some traditional teaching. In addition, the teacher's mission truly becomes that of an advisor, guide, coach, co-learner, mentor, facilitator, and mediator to the students.

1. Teachers as instructors and facilitators.

Teachers, as facilitators, will guide and facilitate students' critical and creative thinking in a collaborative learning environment. They will help students search for references, group students into productive team arrangements, and assist them in processing and debriefing. In order to bring forth the best instructional outcomes, they will be encouraged to collaborate with their colleagues. Teachers, as a group, will work together in order to define the students' programs of study, choose learning methods, select and prepare learning resources, guide and motivate students, and share ideas for student assessment.

2. Teachers as academic and social advisors.

An advisor is an "instructional manager" (Reigeluth, 1987, p. 8) who develops a personal learning plan for each student in conjunction with parents and helps the student achieve his/her educational goals. These goals are not limited to the student's intellectual development, but they may extend to his or her physical,

social, moral, and psychological development, depending on the parents' and student's wishes and interests. Advisors will work individually and in small groups in order to keep track of their advisees' progress on their personal learning plans. They will also give the students and their parents verbal and written feedback on all aspects of the student's progress at regular intervals.

Advisors' tasks (Reigeluth, 1987, p. 8; Reigeluth, Norris, & Ryan, 1990) can be specified as the following: advisors diagnose the students' academic needs for instruction and graduation; help the students select a program to meet those needs; help students access district and community resources; and help students develop academic schedules. They also maintain communications with students' instructors; review students' educational progress through commitment sheets, instructors' feedback, and journals; keep a record of teacher comments from every course; meet with each advisee and evaluate their outcomes in order to identify areas of strength and/or weakness, such as time management, communication and decision-making skills; collaborate with parents; and suggest academic schedule revisions when appropriate. Furthermore, they help the students improve their chances for admission and financial assistance to colleges and universities, offer college preparation and guidance in career selection, and hold parent conferences and personal conferences for each student.

B. Organizational Roles

In addition to being instructors and advisors, teachers will be expected to be leaders and decision makers (Futrell, 1988, p. 375).

(Teachers') role has shifted from teachers as the objects of change to being advisers to and then partners in change: now they are emerging as leaders of change. Teachers are taking more responsibility for their profession and for the conditions under which they work.

These teachers' roles, as a momentous power for school restructuring, have been emphasized in both research and practice. Teachers will be directly involved in the operation of schools, such as making and implementing educational policy and operating school programs. As a result, the role of teachers will be broadened. The teachers' decisions with regard to these operations will affect not only their individual classrooms but also the whole school system.

1. Teachers as resource and technology managers.

Teachers will have to search instructional resources and help the students access them. In addition, they will have to use technology to teach, as well as educate students to some degree in the technology itself. Accordingly, technology management and educational resource selection are regarded as fundamental roles of teachers.

2. Teachers as course and curriculum developers.

Teachers will need a constructivist perspective for curriculum development. The dramatic changes in every aspect of society have made changes in curriculum and in the paradigms of instruction inevitable. As a result, teachers must carefully consider a new educational agenda due to the new needs of our society and its stakeholders. They will have to change the content of the traditional curriculum, reorder the curriculum based on a new array of skills, and change the structure of the curriculum and the style of classroom instruction (Gibbon, 1987, p. 2; McGee, 1987, p. 82). Furthermore, they will reorganize curriculum delivery, develop strategies for curriculum change, implement the curriculum, and evaluate its implementation. In order to carry out all these roles, they will have to work in interdisciplinary teams for building bridges among subjects in the curriculum.

3. Teachers as staff developers. The scope of staff development can be categorized into "staffing" and "training" (Harris, 1980, p.24). However, we present five specific distinctions by combining the distinctions presented by Harris with those presented by Orlich (1989, p. 6): staffing, communication and coordination of resources, evaluation, inservice education, and consultation. This classification will give us a clearer view of staff developers' roles.

- (a) *Staffing:* They will participate in the process of selecting, assigning, evaluating, retiring, and dismissing staff.
- (b) *Communication and coordination of resources:* They will assist with inter-building communications; organize and provide information regarding resources; assist with communications between administration and staff; provide central coordinating services and coordination of efforts; and encourage teachers to talk about their own thinking and teaching.
- (c) *Evaluation:* They will conduct or arrange for needs assessments; evaluate the quality of resources providing inservice education or organizational development, such as programs, personnel, and media; evaluate or arrange for the evaluation of staff-development efforts; and organize for systemic feedback.
- (d) *Facilitation:* They will help teachers improve their skills in implementing curricula and instructional procedures; help them expand their knowledge of subject matter and personal effectiveness; help teachers work collaboratively; and support new teachers in the positive practice and self-directing norms of teaching.
- (e) *Inservice education:* They will plan, implement, and evaluate staff-development programs, such as workshops, clinics, and special projects; and they will assist in administrative planning for those programs.

4. Teachers as financial planners and managers. As organizational managers, teachers will likely participate in a committee for planning, budgeting, and evaluation. They must systematically determine the future allocation of the organization's resources; allocate those resources; assess the outcomes of events that occurred and programs that were offered; and provide information which thereafter can shape future decisions.

5. Teachers as educational system change agents. This role can be divided into participation on a coordinating council, a design team, and design panels (Banathy & Jenks, 1990a, pp. 9-10).

- (a) *A coordinating council.* The leadership group will have the responsibility for overseeing the design process, selecting and establishing design teams, establishing review and approval procedures for the design outcomes, acquiring resources, developing and mobilizing commitment to design in the community, and, in general, providing a guiding and supporting voice for educational design.
- (b) *A design team.* The design team is the primary group that carries out the design process. The team carries out the work of design, in coordination with the coordinating council, design panels, and community task forces.
- (c) *Design panels.* As the design process unfolds, the design team will begin to identify design tasks requiring knowledge or subject-matter expertise not available within the team. Design panels for special design tasks will be formed to provide this needed capability. Other temporary groups or task forces may also be needed to accomplish certain tasks.

Analysis of the Current Educational System

Based on the previous analysis of the main features of the future educational system, we will now discuss the features of the current educational system. Before prescribing the necessary tasks for training, we should examine the current educational system, which has been the fundamental factor in determining the teachers' current status. Although the demand placed on education has soared and success is our goal, "we have managed to teach failure equally well and with devastating effects that are completely contrary to our mission" (Carroll, 1990, p. 361).

I. What Are the Main Features of the Current Educational System?

The main features of the current educational system are related to the internal environment of a school, the external environment of that school, and the resources available to the school.

A. Internal Environment

The internal environment can be divided into two fundamental categories: the current perspectives and the basic structure of the educational system.

1. The current perspectives. Banathy (1991a, pp. 9-12) suggests that our mind-set of the fragmented and traditional scientific world view is the main source of the educational crisis. The fragmented study of education brings about unintegrated and incomplete knowledge and characterization. Likewise, the mechanistic and reductionistic world view does not permit people in the educational system to cope with the complexity, mutual causality, purpose, intention, uncertainty, ambiguity, and ever accelerating dynamic changes that characterize our systems and the larger societal environment.

2. The structure of the educational system. The major structural problem of our current educational system is due to the nature of an "enduring institution." For the past three decades, which have been characterized by extreme social, political, economic, and technological changes, schools have not changed their basic organizational structure. Reigeluth (1987, p. 4) identifies this structure as group learning, constant rotation, time-based grade levels, isolation, and bureaucratic organization. Based on these notions, the current educational system can be characterized as follows:

- (a) *Lack of collaboration and collegiality.* A majority of the teaching takes place within the school. Students and teachers are isolated from their peers, community, and society. Teachers tend to discourage their students from working together or sharing their experiences, because test results are the primary bases for recordkeeping. In relation to this problem, slower students often feel pressure to cheat in order to get a better grade or to keep up with the competition (Carroll, 1990, p. 363).
- (b) *Lack of participatory decision making.* The current educational system does not encourage parents and other stakeholders in the community to take part and cooperate in the teaching process (Reigeluth, 1987, p. 4).
- (c) *Lack of site-based decision making.* There are few communication channels between administrators and teachers. Furthermore, teachers have less influence and professional power within the educational system (Reigeluth, 1987, p. 4).
- (d) *Lack of attention to individual needs and inflexible time schedule.* Regardless of mastery, each student is given the same amount of time before being allowed, or required, to progress to a new level of learning. In addition, knowledge is delivered to about 30 students at a time, and

students often rotate from one teacher to another every 45 minutes or so.

The two previously mentioned features, the perspectives and the structure of the educational system, have dictated the current, piecemeal educational reforms. As a result, the existing system lacks a blueprint for comprehensive systemic redesign, integration of various solutions, and understanding of the essential nature of education as a societal system (Banathy, 1991a, p. 12). Through this extremely fragmented and incremental approach, the reform efforts can be viewed as "add-ons" to an established and immutable structure. Accordingly, there is no blueprint to integrate the various solution ideas into a comprehensive and consistent system. More importantly, the current educational system fails to interact with other societal systems so that it fails to respond to the rapid and dynamic changes of the larger society.

B. External Environment: District, Community, and Larger Society

Educational institutions have been directly and indirectly affected in many ways by various complex societal changes, including political, social, and economic trends (Lieberman, 1988, p. 5). The teacher shortage has been growing in many areas of the U.S.A. Teaching has been a female occupation. More and more experienced teachers are leaving the profession.

Teachers have felt that the social and economic changes in our society are the main causes of the students' lack of interest and respect. Teachers are suffering from the brunt of family structure changes and the unwillingness or inability of government and private agencies to respond to these changes. Moreover, business groups have begun to voice their call for changes in the educational system.

C. Resources

Printed materials, mainly textbooks, are the dominant instructional resources. Teachers rely on experts from outside the school, directives from supervisors, and advice from others in similar roles. Moreover, the overuse of lecturing is a major problem in high school instruction. There is no incentive for independent decision making, collaborative learning, or instruction based on the students' interests.

II. What Is the Teacher's Status in the Current System?

Most teachers in the current system are educationally conservative and accept the *status quo*. They almost unquestioningly accept the technologies that control schooling (McClure, 1988, p. 61). Moreover, the "egalitarian norm" (Lieberman, 1988, p. 7) has long been held by teachers. The norm stresses that teachers must be *teachers* no matter how

