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INTRODUCTION

PREPARING FOR OUR FUTURE *Transcending Existing Mindsets of Schools and Change*

Patrick M. Jenlink

Not all changes, even desirable ones, contain the power of transcendence. It is possible for you to have a change of orientation and still continue to exist in a linear, cause-and-effect system. Transcendence operates outside such a system. Transcendence evokes the power to start from scratch, outside the realm where previous causal actions are in play. Because transcendence is an ever-new state of being, once you enter into it, each new moment is alive with fresh possibilities—possibilities that may never have seemed possible before.

—Robert Fritz

We are in the dawning of a new global age, and on the horizon stretching before us is the future. The future will be dramatically different from the present, and it is already calling us into preparation for major changes being brought to life by forces of change that will require us to transcend current mindsets of the world we know.

How are the forces shaping the world going to change the nature of modern organizations? How must the current educational system change in order to meet the demands of the twenty-first century? What are the touchstones essential to transcending current mindsets about schools and educational change? These are questions that confront us now, as we enter the dawning of a new century and the light of a different future shines bright, bringing stark contrast to the old and new paradigms of a changing world. Perhaps our greatest challenge lies in unfettering the American mind from the industrial age mindsets that have

continued to constrain us to a model of schooling that is archaic and obsolete.

THE CHANGING MODERN ORGANIZATION

History shows that organizations vary, along with the nature of environmental change (Bell 1973; Toffler 1990; Reich 1991). The agrarian revolution led us into the industrial age, which gave way to the post-industrial age and brought us rapidly into the information age. We are now experiencing a rapid transition into what has been characterized as the global age. New forms of organizations are emerging that are far different than the organization of two, three, and four decades ago. Learning organizations (Senge 1990), knowledge organizations (Drucker 1993), and network organizations (Hastings 1993) exemplify how the forces of change are altering the basic business organization. As organizations are influenced more and more by the global

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forces of change, global learning organizations and business ecosystems are being projected as the fourth wave of businesses in the twenty-first century (Marquardt and Reynolds 1994; Maynard and Mehrrens 1993). In the midst of this change in mindsets of organizations, we find that we have become a society of organizations wherein knowledge is the recognized coinage of exchange and leverage for a new generation of knowledge workers (Drucker 1993).

We have ridden the waves of change (Morgan 1988) across the last century, experiencing major shifts in the mindsets that govern and guide organizational, cultural, economic, technological, geopolitical, and social affairs. And now we face the new realities (Drucker 1989) of a changing world and the promises of a new future.

A CHANGING SOCIETY

Equally, the waves of change that have influenced organizations have also touched the larger society. Reflections of changes in society of the last century are recognizable in many of the major social systems through which youth connect to their adult lives.

There are two primary systems in which we spend most of our lifetime. One is the family and the other is the workplace. A third system prepares us for the transition between these two systems; it is the educational system. In the agrarian age, the family system was characterized by the extended family, and the family farm or family-owned business helped complete a portrait of agrarian life. Expanding a view of society at this time was the one-room schoolhouse as well as transportation by horse and wagon.

The industrial age changed these systems in fundamental ways. The factory became the dominant model of existence from the workplace to the schoolhouse. Transportation evolved into the automobile, and advancements in technology, most notably the telephone, began a revolution that would connect the world in ways unexperienced. The fundamental change initiated by the industrial revolution has continued into the information age with significant impact on the family and workplace. Unfortunately, the educational system has

fallen behind in meeting the demands created by the global changes we are experiencing today.

With the changes of the family system—evolving from the extended family to a nuclear model, and more currently, the single-parent and two-working-parent family—new demands have been placed on the educational system to help mediate the tension placed on the children by a changing family structure. Likewise, with dramatic shifts in the workplace brought on by advances in technology and a changing global environment, new and additional demands have been placed on the educational system to prepare youth to enter the workforce better equipped. Unfortunately, these increasing demands, brought on by changing family and workplace systems, have left education in a position of assuming responsibilities that can no longer be addressed within the existing educational system. Preparing children for their place in a global workforce as functioning knowledge workers will require new and expanding competencies that will enable students to negotiate their roles as contributing citizens in the twenty-first century.

WHAT MUST CHANGE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION TODAY?

American education is at a critical juncture. The new changes in the workplace will drastically shift expectations for student competencies and school-to-work transition requirements. As the infrastructure of the workplace evolves into a learning community and knowledge becomes the social center of activity, the expectation for schools will be to prepare the next generation of students to function in the new work environment. Students will increasingly need skills for critical thinking, problem posing and problem solving, and integrative reasoning. As the advances in information technology enable organizations to create networking infrastructures, students will need to develop new levels of computer skills.

Knowledge- and learning-transfer competencies, along with knowledge creation, will be increasingly in demand as organizations take on the character of learning organizations. Systems thinking and visioning, team learning, and personal

mastery competencies are further examples of how schools must redesign the students' learning life environment for the future.

Additional demands will be placed on the educational system to prepare students to work in diverse multicultural settings that are becoming more and more a part of the real-world workplace. Connecting students to the future will require a changed educational system. It will require an entirely new system that leaves behind the industrial age model for schools. But educational change is neither easy nor often successful.

Piecemeal change efforts, often characterized as fragmented or tinkering at the edges, have proven less than satisfactory. While enjoying some initial success, past and more recent attempts at change do not produce fundamental, long-lasting change. Consequently, there is an increasing call for systemic change (Banathy 1991, 1992; Glickman 1993; Goodlad 1984; Perelman 1987; Reigeluth 1994).

Fundamental changes in the educational system begin at the deepest level of purpose, values, and beliefs about learning and all corollary components that support learning, such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, policy, etc. Where we have experienced considerable failure in our efforts to work within the system to bring about change, we must now move outside the existing system and work to create a new twenty-first century educational system. This will require that mindsets about schools and educational change be confronted and changed if we are to prepare for the future.

TOUCHSTONES FOR TRANSCENDING MINDSETS OF SCHOOLS AND CHANGE

Leaping out of the existing twentieth-century school system requires transcending existing paradigms of educational change and transgenerational mindsets of schools, schooling, and the education found within the existing system. Transcendence is achieved by engaging stakeholders in a disciplined inquiry approach to educational systems change (Banathy 1991) that negotiates outside the constraints of the existing system.

Educational systems design connects stakeholders with the fundamental elements of purpose and identity, core values and beliefs, characteristics of an educational system oriented toward the twenty-first century, functions essential to creating the new learning system, and the enabling or support systems for the new educational system. This type of fundamental change (Reigeluth 1994) is not without major shifts in the way we think about and understand schools or educational change. It will require substantive shifts in personal and collectively held mindsets for those who choose to participate in the process. Changing mindsets will, in turn, require becoming sensitive to the touchstones for personal change.

Touchstones for Changing Mindsets

Breaking free from existing mindsets will require participants engaging in change to get in touch with themselves, individually and collectively. Critical self-examination along with reflection are important. Personal mastery (Senge 1990) is another step that must be taken to change mindsets. Table 1 suggests examples of touchstones for changing mindsets.

To change, a place must be created for the new mindset, and that requires the discarding or death of the old mindset. William Bridges (1991) suggests that there are three overlapping and interactive phases that we process: endings, neutral zones, and beginnings. Most people fail because they try to begin something before they have ended what they are trying to replace. When we think about shifting mindsets, we are really talking about changing frames of reference that serve as an interpretative lens for our interactions with the world around us. In addition to the frames of reference, we are also changing basic patterns or routines that are used in association with the frames of reference, which enables us to operationalize our world. Shifting mindsets is a complex process, and before we can assimilate a new mindset, the old one must necessarily be left behind. During the transition period between ending and beginning, we are in a neutral zone. The neutral zone provides an opportunity for grieving the loss and for creat-

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TOUCHSTONES FOR CHANGING MINDSETS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systems thinking and practice in personal/professional life• Personal mastery and self-development• Critical self-inquiry and personal reflection• Identify and understand existing mindsets• Dialogue and communicative action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing alternative futures through visioning• Discarding old language and creating new• Focusing inward on managing interpersonal transitions• Connecting with sense of purpose and identity• Understanding the death and grieving cycle of change

Table 1 Touchstones for Changing Mindsets

ing bridges to the new mindset. The touchstones provided in table 1 are ways to connect stakeholders with past and future mindsets. While most change is introduced in social context, the real work in changing mindsets is an individual affair and occurs in a personal psychological context.

Existing Mindsets of Schools

As Reigeluth (1994) notes, the industrial age ushered in what may be the only time in American history that we have experienced systemic change of such societal proportions with respect to the educational system (a change from the one-room schoolhouse to the factory model of education). The information age has yet to offer equal fundamental change for schools and the educational system. This type of deep substantive change required of the existing educational system must be one that is systemic and considers changing the *whole* system. Breaking out of the factory model mindset of schools has proven to be very difficult. In large part this can be attributed to the models for educational change, which haven't changed substantively since the industrial revolution's impact on schools. Equally, the difficulty for change lies in the shared mindsets of what schools, schooling, and education are that often exist in as many as three generations of citizens living today. Table 2 compares the characteristics of the twentieth-century factory model of schools to those of a school for the twenty-first century.

The unchangeability of education and the intractable nature emphasized by failed reform ef-

forts accents the power of the rigid paradigms that have come to characterize schools. Shifting the paradigm of schools will require that stakeholders who have a vested interest in our children and their future transcend their existing mindsets about educational change.

Existing Mindsets of Change

Perhaps one of the greatest problems that American education faces today is understanding change. As William Bridges (1991) suggests, it is not the tangible, observable change that fails, but rather our inability to manage the personal psychological transitions that each of us must engage in to be a participant in change. It is not the experience of change (which is external), but what we do with the experience (which is internal) that determines our successes and failures with change.

As we enter the information age, schools and the schooling process will need to shift dramatically to come into alignment with twenty-first-century thinking, which is systems oriented. Systems thinking will require a reexamination of change itself. Unfortunately, we are still caught in the mid-twentieth-century mindset that viewed the problem with schools as lack of change. As we prepare to enter the twenty-first century, we now understand "*the current problem is change itself*. It's the problem of 'survivors' of yesterday's change projects, and everyone is a survivor" (Bridges 1991, 123). Table 3 provides some contrast between traditional twentieth-century change and a more systemic twenty-first-century change.

20TH-CENTURY SCHOOL	21ST-CENTURY SCHOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factory model • Learn what to learn • Teaching as telling, information dissemination by teacher • Closed boundaries for learning • Individualism • Teacher poses problems, defines learning context • Convergent problem solving, one best way • Competitive learning environment, win-lose • Parent external to formal learning relationship and process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning community model • Learn how to learn • Teaching as facilitating, socially constructed knowledge by students and teacher • Open boundaries for learning • Collectivism and community • Students cojoin with peers and teachers to pose problems, coresponsibility for learning context • Divergent and convergent problem solving, many ways • Cooperative and collaborative learning environment, win-win • Parent or guardian integral learning team member

Table 2 Comparing Two Paradigms of School

The key to transcending existing mindsets of educational change and preparing education to enter the twenty-first century will require that individuals find and activate the touchstones for shifting from continued applications of old paradigms of change to embracing a twenty-first-century para-

digm of systemic change. As stakeholders begin to transcend old paradigms and embrace a new mindset of educational change, they will be faced with a new set of touchstones essential to changing education systemically.

OLD MINDSET OF CHANGE	NEW MINDSET OF CHANGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working within existing system to fix parts and improve old system • Change is short term • Planning process that perpetuates • Views problem as within system • External change agent • Limited stakeholder involvement • Individual and team oriented • Autocratic leadership • Focus on improving programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working outside existing system to create new system • Change is continuous and lifelong • Designing process that creates • Views problem as entire system • Stakeholders as change agent(s) • High stakeholder involvement • Team and community oriented • Shared leadership • Focus on creating learning system

Table 3 Contrasting Mindsets of Educational Change

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TOUCHSTONES FOR CHANGING SCHOOLS THROUGH SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Systemic change in education connotes a new holistic view of education and its relationship to the larger environment. Various authors and researchers (Banathy 1991, 1992; Reigeluth and Garfinkel 1994) have noted that systemic change is about changing the entire system rather than fixing any single part. Systemic change requires seeing the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of parts to the whole, of understanding that a change in part of the system necessarily influences the whole system. Additionally, there has been some distinction between *systematic*, which suggests consistency; *systemwide*, which suggests change within an entire system; and *systemic*, which suggests transcending the existing system to design a new system. Transcending the existing system (the mindsets of schools, schooling, and education within) will require that those embarking on the systemic change journey (Banathy 1991) first change their mindsets about change and secondly engage in a design process for liberation from the existing system.

Examples of touchstones for creating a new twenty-first century educational system are listed in table 4. Those who will be the architects and designers of a new learning system for tomorrow's

children must be sensitive to the concept of transcendence. They must also understand the importance of the roles touchstones play in creating a self-renewing school system and in designing a new educational system.

CONCLUSION

What the future holds for us is only speculative at best. We won't know for sure until we arrive. What we do know is that our current educational system is not adequate for the task of preparing today's students for tomorrow's world. Given the changes we are presently witnessing and what is envisioned for the future, our present educational system will not meet the demands. Changing the educational system from within is not the answer. We need to liberate ourselves from the industrial age system we currently have in place. We must engage in fundamental systemic change that designs a new twenty-first-century educational system. Transcending the existing system will require major shifts in commonly held mindsets about school, schooling, and education, as well as how we approach educational change. One thing is for certain: we will find ourselves in the future whether we take responsibility or not. The choice is ours. If we do not assume our responsible role in guiding our destiny, it will be our children who bear the consequences.

TOUCHSTONES FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

- Transcending existing mindsets of schools, schooling, education, and change
- Reconnecting American people with the purpose of schools, schooling, and education in a democratic society and reconnecting people with their responsibility to education
- Applying systems theory, thinking, and practice to schools, schooling, and education
- A disciplined inquiry approach to educational systems design
- Inclusion of a broad base of diverse stakeholders as user-designers in the process
- Scaffolding change through new vistas of evaluation as critical inquiry, professional development as learning, communication as dialogue and communicative action, leadership as shared responsibility, and management of change as continuous facilitation of transitions and transformation
- Collectively creating a common language for systemic change with all stakeholders
- Understanding educational systems design as learning change for the future

Table 4 Touchstones for Systemic Change in Schools and Education