Are Schools Really Like This?

Factors Affecting Teacher Attitude
toward School Improvement

INNOVATIONS IN SCIENCE EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

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Are Schools Really Like This?: Factors Affecting Teacher Attitude
toward School Improvement

J. Gary Lilyquist

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This book is dedicated to the improvement of
learning opportunities for all children

Foreword

This is a hopeful book with a message that should cheer those who have devoted their lives to public schools. It emphatically states that the system should be saved, although it affirms that change is needed. It is about how to reconcile differing visions of school through an understanding of what is involved in the working of schools and of the nature of change.

The book's several strengths make it useful both to readers who are school people as well as to those who are not. It really does describe what schools are like through a deep and detailed discussion of three case studies. It actually brings systems thinking and a review of the research into school work in an attempt to analyze how to make needed and lasting changes.

Its personal, interactive style engages the reader in a conversation about how to change schools to improve student learning. It ventures into the realm of teacher status while clearly warning us not to blame the people. It stresses the complexity of the institution and its interdependence with its client groups.

It is clearly a book by someone who respects and enjoys working with schools and the people who are connected with them.

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Preface

Systems thinking, already an established movement in many businesses and industries, has only recently been introduced into the educational system. This book is intended to provide a framework for educators, teachers-in-training, educational administrators, parents, community members, government leadership, and policy makers. To successfully carry out school improvements, the framework combines the concepts of systems thinking, mental models, effective school research, and Quality Management Theory. Using analysis of six organizational dimensions (internal and external cultures, leadership, strategy, structure, and results), three case studies show the attempts of school systems to balance the culture's visions of a good school. The book also comments on how these individuals and groups could apply more systems thinking.

The examples of three school cultures that are likely to be familiar to the reader offer a different way to approach school improvement. First, the book offers in a systemic format a rationale as to why people react (positively and negatively) to school improvement. Second, it compares three case studies that support suggestions of why schools are not improving. Third, it suggests a new approach, a Balance Alignment Model, for systemic school improvement. The concluding chapters discuss three key boundaries that cannot be ignored if we want to carry out successful projects to increase student learning. Otherwise these boundaries may contradict popular ideas about how to improve our schools.

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I value the opportunity to have worked with Dr. Betty B. Hoskins, the Developmental Editor. She was very helpful and supportive of changes in the text.

Without the support of JoAnne, I would not have had the opportunity to write this book.

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