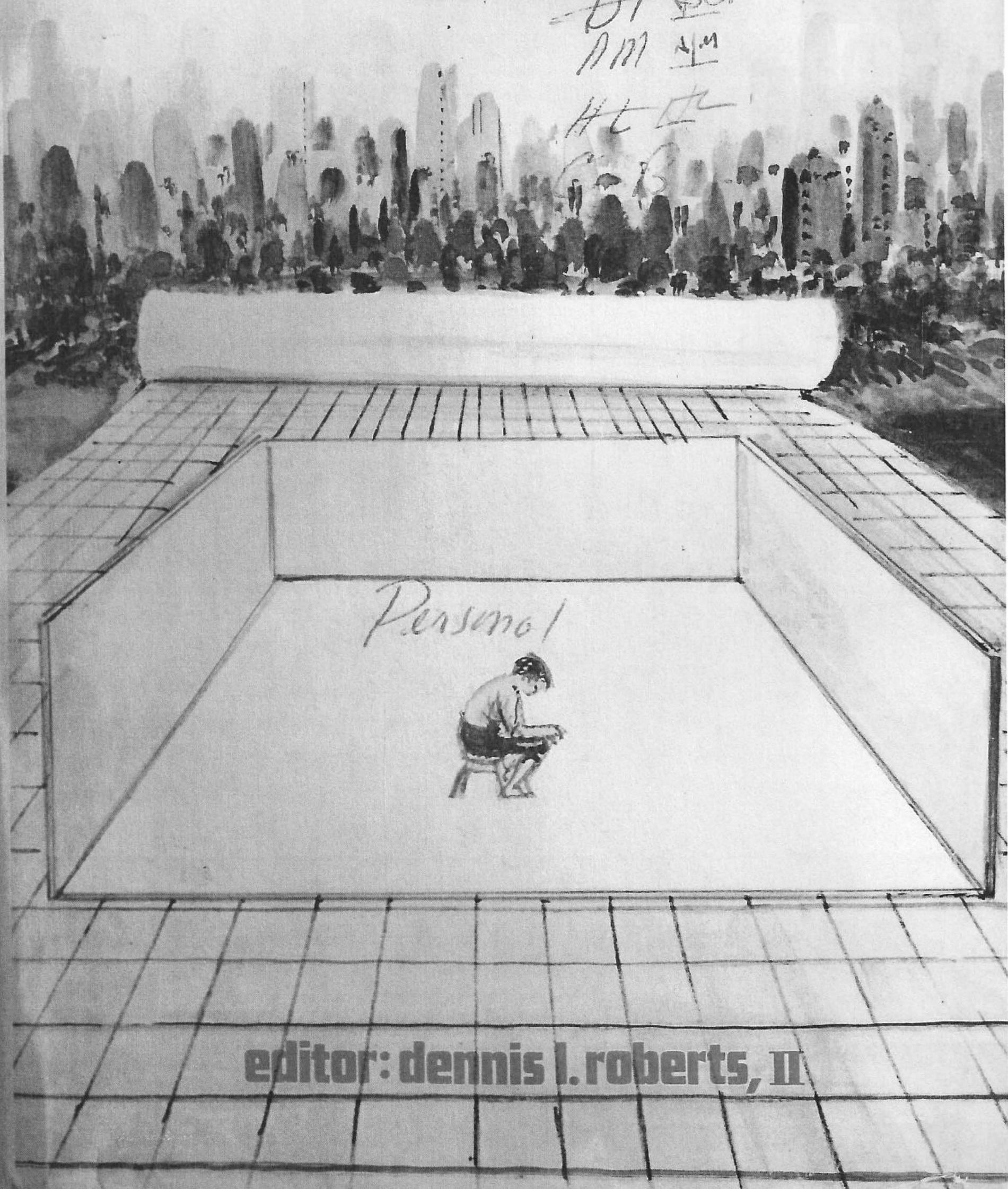


# PLANNING URBAN EDUCATION

new ideas and techniques to  
transform learning in the city

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*Personal*

editor: dennis l. roberts, II

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*New Ideas and Techniques  
to Transform Learning in the City*

Dennis L. Roberts, II  
*Editor*

Educational Technology Publications  
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632

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Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number:  
73-160895.

International Standard Book Number:  
0-87778-024-2.

*First Printing*

## PREFACE

It is now painfully evident that our urban schools are caught in an accelerating cycle of decline. Since urban schools will constitute the vast majority of American schools by the end of the 1970's, we are talking about a decline in American education.

The true measure of a structure of formal public education goes well beyond its effects on individual children. Cities are paying a heavy toll for the decline in educational quality—the economic, political, cultural and social life is being directly affected. Thus, we hear about the exodus of business and industry from the cities, and learn that one of the chief reasons given for this movement is the poor quality of education received by the graduates of urban schools.

The decline has begun to trigger a national loss in public confidence in our public schools. Yet, the most evident and tragic failures are occurring in those quarters of the city that need education most desperately—the low-income neighborhoods.

Whether the reaction is vocal protest or quiet frustration, the result throughout our cities is disillusionment with an institution that should be stimulating hope and promise. No citizen, no business or industry, no parent, no teacher, no school administrator, or no student should rest easy while this spiral of decline continues.

As an urbanized society, we are increasingly dependent on a modern educational system for the development of sophisticated

manpower. Yet America's educational system is not urban-oriented; it is operationally still rooted in agrarian thinking. The updating of our public schools represents one of the most serious domestic problems facing America in the decade ahead.

The caliber of urban schools has a direct relationship to the economic, political, cultural and social life of the city itself. As the quality of schooling declines, the effects on both the producer and consumer are critical. In an age of education, consumers need quality education to survive. If they are denied the kind of education required, they are compelled to seek alternatives. For some who can afford it, there is the option of private schools. For many more, the option is to move to the suburbs, where both the quality of life and schooling are viewed as superior. For those who do not have the economic means for pursuing these alternatives, the option is to increase one's voice in the improvement of local schools. This latter option—largely relegated to the poor—is taking the form of decentralization and community control.

But what is indeed urban about urban schools? First, the urban context is one in which there is persistent stress imposed by intensely concentrated social realities. Although, of course, all schools operate in such a context, there are basic differences for those in urban centers. Schools in smaller, more homogeneous, communities have much less tension, because the schools reflect a reality that is more congruent to that of the surrounding community. Furthermore, there is not the intense consequence and concentration of so many varied slices of life. The urban school finds itself located in the center of great density and diversity, which affects very basically man's natural search for human satisfaction. Urban man must work through a whole intricate maze to satisfy both his physical and psycho-social needs. The consequences of urbanization to the individual—his dignity, his sense of "self" worth and his aspirations—are at the core of the problems under review here.

Density, one of the key urban characteristics, systematically results in a gradual loss of identity. Is the city dweller being lost in the massive shuffle of big city life? Urban society makes the individual feel like a mass man—depersonalized man. We hear from our instant-replay mass media about mass deaths from floods, from holiday tolls on the highways, from war and from the daily screams of the fire engines; and the individual soon learns that he is not as valuable as all that.

Further, modern urban centers, in order to deal with masses of people, create large organizations—bureaucracies. Bureaucratization continues the dehumanization process by communicating a sense of *powerlessness* to the individual. We are all familiar with, “You can’t fight City Hall,” or “What can one man do?” It is virtually impossible for an individual parent or citizen to know how to deal with a large, centralized school system.

Cities are also the places where the pluralistic nature of our society is most visible. We know that there is a Black section of the city, a Jewish, an Italian, a Puerto Rican and an Oriental section. When election returns are described, they reveal ethnic or religious voting trends. In short, cities are diverse. This diversity further affects the individual by pointing out his disconnection from others. How do I as a Black person connect with whites? How can I as a Jew connect with gentiles? Further, how do these sub-groups continue their own culture while connecting to the mainstream? What do they have to give up? Why?

The urban environment has become negative to human growth and development. Public schools have been unable to adapt themselves quickly enough to serve as instruments for human renewal. Public schools do deal with the next generation. They *could* have profound effects on our children’s behavior. Public schools could prepare the next generation to use political and economic power differently—for rebuilding negative environments such as ghettos, for cleaning up our polluted water and air, and for combating disease, poverty and ignorance.

In short, public schools are the only social institution left which can influence an entire generation in humane ways. The next generation will assume roles as citizen, worker, parent and consumer. How and where will they learn these roles? Will the next generation perform these roles in essentially the same manner as previous generations?

Public schools can become the renewal instruments of modern society—but not as they are presently structured. Since urban schools are the most visible problems, we must start there. But the reader must realize that the urban crisis in education is itself a symptom of a broader problem with American education.

American education is in need of reform, and it must begin with our urban centers. How well we deal with urban education will, to a great extent, determine whether we can indeed reform American

education swiftly enough to reverse the dehumanizing effects of the other forces which are shaping us all.

We have learned some things from our initial attempts at urban school improvement, e.g., compensatory education, decentralization and alternative subsystems. For example, we have learned about the nature of the educational problem. We had assumed that the problem was with the student, not the school; with the client, rather than the institution. With such a diagnosis, it made sense to mount programs of compensatory education, i.e., concentrated remediation of the "disadvantaged" learner with the aim of rehabilitating him to fit the existing school. Most of our federal programs of intervention—most notably Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—were compensatory in nature, attempting to have learners adjust to schools, rather than the other way around.

It was not until the latter part of the sixties that we began to raise questions about compensatory education. Reports from the field began to indicate that the results were not encouraging.

Consequently, any appropriate assumption for the seventies shifts the problem from the learner to the institution. The problem is *institutional obsolescence*. We are asking the standard school, which was forged in the nineteenth century, to solve twentieth and twenty-first century problems. The schools as presently standardized cannot meet the challenge which universal public education demands. The schools as major social institutions simply do not have the capacity to deal with diversity. We are asking public schools to become the major instrumentation for solving many of our social ills—poverty, racism, alienation, powerlessness—while also responding to the manpower needs of an advanced technological society. In short, we have given public education a mission for which it presently is not prepared. Faced with these growing demands, schoolmen have responded the only way they could, through an add-on strategy, i.e., building layers onto the standard educational structure, while at the same time keeping the present system running. Thus, we have added vocational education, special education, adult education, early childhood education, etc., but each has remained separated from the other.

The result over the years is that the total educational system has become ponderous and unresponsive to the growing aspirations of those who use schools. The basic charge for the seventies, therefore, is institutional reform.

The second major assumption of the sixties was that more money was needed for public school improvement. While on the surface this does not appear to be a fallacious assumption, it becomes so when more money is used to do more of the same thing. When, for example, more money is used for more reading teachers, more counselors and more psychologists who try to rehabilitate the learner to adjust to the conventional school, then *new* money is used in old ways. Federal money made available to public education in the sixties was *new* money which could have been used in *new* ways, thereby providing guidance for a better usage of the old money.

We have been pouring money into an outdated system, and if it continues, we will end up with an improved, outdated educational system. Putting more money into the present system is like putting money into an old car—after a point, diminishing returns set in. We are well into this stage.

In New York City, for example, the school system doubled its educational budget in less than a decade. Taking into account inflation and rising costs, the doubling of expenses has produced no significant difference in results. We assume, for instance, that we should continue to build schoolhouses. The Parkway Program in Philadelphia—the “School Without Walls”—used the elm as a campus and saved the school district \$15 million on construction costs alone.

The question for the seventies must be, “More money for what?” Assumptions undergirding the fiscal policies for the decade of the seventies must center on the effects or results of various conceptions of education; i.e., given the same per-pupil cost, what are the results of different educational approaches?

A third assumption of the last decade had to do with the notion that the only legitimate party of interest in education was the professional educator—an administrator. It was his responsibility to decide how the money was to be spent. However, the sixties also saw the rise of the parties closest to the teaching front—teachers, students and parents. The seventies will see an increased voice of these major parties of interest in educational decision-making. Consequently, the assumption for the seventies must emphasize the consumer of schools—parents and students as well as teachers and administrators. An integral part of this assumption is that the *process* is as important as the *product*. The parties of interest must be connected in a *search* for quality education. Ideas, however sound, cannot be superimposed on

others. Doing something *for* or *to* others must be replaced by doing something *with* others.

There have been and will continue to be books written on selected aspects of this subject. We are just beginning the long, hard journey toward urban reform. This volume, however, deals with the urban crisis in education from a scientific, technological and *total systems* frame of reference. Urban education is viewed within the context of a total urban community system. This makes the book both unique and useful. Most of the other books treat the issue from the perspective of various disciplines: history, sociology, anthropology, psychology and political science. This book deals with the management, planning, cost-effectiveness, systems analysis and communications approaches to urban school reform. This is not to say that the other, more human, dimensions are not treated—only that they are viewed from an overall framework which is total systems-oriented. The tapping and coordination of a wide range of available resources—not only those commonly used in education—as a means for improving our ability to effectively respond to human needs is the central theme of this collection.

This book is substantive. It introduces its readers, especially those in education, to new concepts: *ekistics*, *city of man*, *systems approach*, *forecasting*, *cost-effectiveness analysis*, *sense of community*, *urban simulation*, *urban service*, *information system design*, *cybernetic-ontogenetic approach*, *urban metapolicy*, *service delivery system*, *urban education marketplace* and the *turnkey approach*, to mention a few.

A word needs to be said about the contributors to this volume. What impressed me was the list of *new* names, representing fields of expertise not normally utilized in educational reports dealing with the urban school crisis. The authors are not detached, scholastic observers of the urban scene. They are involved practitioners and researchers, who have been in the action, and who are currently spearheading a wave of innovations on the urban education and urban planning scenes. Each views the problem from his own, unique vantage point.

There are, to be sure, some old pro's, like Robert J. Havighurst, whose vast experience and unique understanding of educational and organizational development help to make the volume useful.

This volume provides all those interested in renewing urban environments—especially our public schools—into humane centers serving human needs, with new insights and new analytic tools to grapple with the enormously difficult, but necessary, tasks ahead. It

should be read by students and teachers, parents and administrators, researchers and practitioners, businessmen and governmental officials, and by all of those who are genuinely searching for *new* ways to make our schools more effective and our cities more livable places.

Mario D. Fantini  
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reasoned and total, rather than a fragmentary, look at the community's educational needs and how they might best be met, replacing the confusion and hit-or-miss decision-making of the past with rational, concrete judgments.

Providing the systems expertise for school requirements analysis, supplying the resources for school systems planning, conducting that planning, and managing its large-scale implementation might well be the most important of industry's unique contributions to the urban school of the future.

## **THE PERFORMANCE CONTRACT: Turnkey Approach to Urban School System Reform**

**Charles Blaschke, Peter Briggs  
and Reed Martin**

The performance contract is a managerial tool to ensure that results are achieved, yet responsible innovation is encouraged. The approach is simple in concept, although rather complex in realization. With technical assistance, the learning problem is analyzed, and delineation of achievement outcomes required are specified. A request for proposals (RFP) is developed and sent by the local education agency to potential contractors which have demonstrated competent and creative activity in the specific and related fields. The RFP does not prescribe how the job must be done but does establish the performance, financial, administrative and legal parameters of the operation. The RFP requires that the bidder guarantee specific results for specific costs. The confidence that the bidder has in his approach will be reflected in the level of guarantee, social practicability, time and costs. The Management Support Group (MSG), having assisted in evaluating proposals from bidders and aiding in the negotiation stage, presents the strengths and weaknesses of the firms' proposals to the Board, which awards the contract.

The program is conducted with a specified number of students. Incentives are provided in the contract for the contractor to bring each

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child up to specified levels of performance at least cost and to develop a final curriculum and program for which he will guarantee results. The performance contract would require the firm to supply adequate information on programs and dollars spent at agreed upon points in the year. For once, the school would have the managerial tool and flow of information needed to assure that results are meeting policy objectives.

After the demonstration period is completed and all relevant costs, procedures, achievements and performance data have been validated, the performance contract requires the contractor to guarantee an equivalent level of efficiency for the incorporation of the new program into the entire local system. In other words, the contractor accepts the responsibility for providing a reliable, effective, fiscally responsible program; he also specifies the changes upon which success is conditioned. The local education agency then "turnkeys" the instructional program into the school. The MSG may follow through with management assistance services until the school develops its own internal capability to perform the process, usually after the first year of "turnkey" operations.

### **The Turnkey: Lever for Internal Reform**

The turnkey process has been utilized for several years in the field of housing, but its application in education is rather recent. There are significant qualitative differences between a housing and education turnkey project. In the former the concern is a *product*, a house developed by a private corporation, which then "turns the key" over to the owner or the city public housing authority. In education the object of concern is a process which is to be incorporated into an existing institutional framework maintaining high levels of efficiency and effectiveness. Whereas the house, in the former case, meets certain performance specifications, the instructional process, in the case of the latter, guarantees to produce certain levels of performance in the products, which are the students. Even with these differences, some of the reasons for the turnkey process to have been used in housing are analogous to those which make it advantageous in the field of education.

Housing departments in most cities quickly became internalized bureaucracies, creating problems of restrictive codes, archaic specifications, timely deliveries of final products, and increased costs of

development and operations. Facing the traditional barriers to innovation, many public housing agencies, under pressures of taxpayers to reduce time and costs, chose to develop performance-type contracts with private builders who would develop new houses or housing developments and then on a turnkey basis turn over ownership to the public authority. In most cases, the private contractor could deal with labor union demands and bypass archaic regulations better than could a government agency. It could also afford to experiment in a responsible and cost-effective manner with the support of the citizenry. If a government experiments and fails, bureaucracy continues to grow; if industry fails, it goes out of business. In addition, where large, but limited, markets were made available through public housing authorities to potential contractors, firms would provide internal research and development resources in seeking innovative solutions, realizing that approaches and sub-systems developed for the first site, a market penetrating tactic, can be amortized in a much larger potential market in the future. The end result was a highly visible demonstration program, which proved to local governments that the existing building codes were obsolete, thus creating political pressures and the leverage for internal reform.

Similarly, as a school superintendent considers the implementation of a new instructional system in his existing school structure, he is faced with administrative and political problems and with the cost of adopting the new system. The performance contract-turnkey approach provides him some answers and a powerful tool for leverage. It gives a school superintendent the basis on which to argue the merits of instituting administrative changes upon the introduction of a new instructional system, which will have been proven in part of his system, thereby increasing its credibility. Additional leverage can be gained by the contractor's alternative levels of guarantee during the turnkey phase. The school superintendent can ask the contractor, for example, to guarantee a specific level of performance within the school system whenever the contractor's program is incorporated therein, *conditional upon specific administrative and managerial changes needed if the level of benefits and the potential of the learning system is to be maintained system-wide*. Hence the school superintendent has enormous leverage when he goes to the school board, the classroom teachers association, or community groups asking for increased dollars to implement a performance budgeting and flexible scheduling system; to train teachers

as instructional managers, and para-professionals as teacher aides; or to operate the school on a 12-hour-day basis, etc.

The contractor might be willing to guarantee 90% of the cost-effectiveness demonstrated during the first year's demonstration cycle, if the school system is willing to adopt these changes; if the school is *only* willing to retrain the teachers, then he will guarantee *only* 40% efficiency. Choice is left to the board to select the alternative they prefer—in light of the political, social and economic consequences of their alternatives.

One example of needed changes might be teacher retraining. Many contractors, especially those using self-paced individualized instruction, will utilize para-professionals trained for specific functions, ranging from operating equipment to assisting the instructional manager in administrative chores. To create instructional management capabilities within the classroom, teachers will need to be retrained in attitude, as well as technical proficiencies; and incentives, in many cases, will have to be provided for the new classroom manager to help children achieve as much as possible, given time and costs constraints. The school system will have to adopt some degree of performance budgeting to account for student achievement and costs among the various classroom managers. It might have to consider hiring and training para-professionals to replace some of the professionals who leave through yearly turn-over.

This illustration should point out the need to develop a managerial system and environment that is conducive to the effective application of new instructional technology or learning systems. Therefore, in order to ensure the most effective turnkey of an instructional program throughout a school system, it is necessary to conduct program planning and analysis in the following areas:

### Planning Steps

1. The first basic step is to determine the relative cost-effectiveness of the contractor's program. Because the contractor's program will have been separate from the school with performance accounting procedures, it should be relatively easy to determine the cost-effectiveness of the various program elements, such as the reading program, the work-study program, the math program, the achievement motivation program, etc., if proper cost reporting requirements are specified and fulfilled. To the extent that the first year's operation was

quasi-developmental, the actual allocation of cost will be made more difficult. It is therefore critical that the contractor be required to keep an exact log of specific time allocated to the instructional process and time allocated to the developmental process. Moreover, in the case of the latter, every effort should be made to determine those developmental costs which may be expected to reoccur during the turnkey phase, as opposed to those starting costs which were unique to the specific demonstration cycle and operations. In cases where the accounting for time is not precise, there could be a gross understatement of the start-up costs for the turnkey process, including staff training, development of procedures, etc.

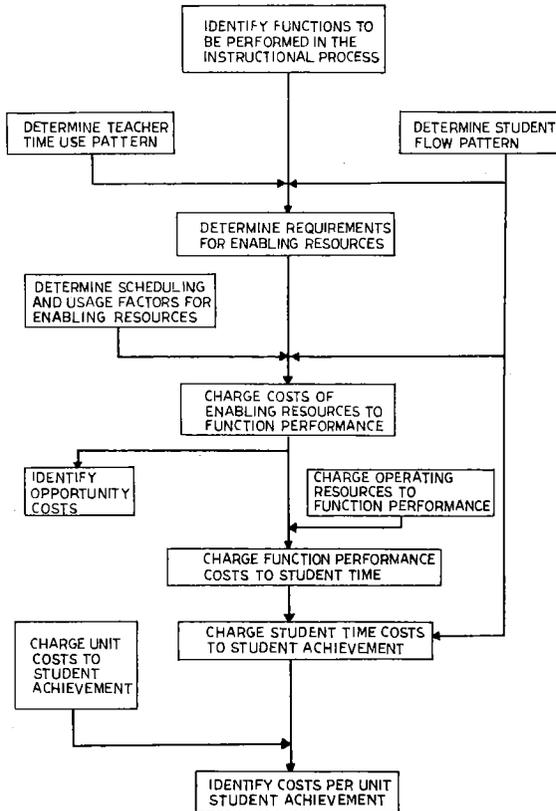
2. The second step is to determine the cost-effectiveness of the specific school system's relevant instructional program. Allocation of costs is particularly difficult when direct substitution is impossible, e.g., seldom is reading, which lends itself to performance contracting, taught as a separate course at junior and senior high levels; however, one has to make assumptions on the basis of each particular school system's situation. Another judgment is required prior to the analysis in justifying what fixed and variable costs should be included, e.g., if the contractor rents a transportable structure during the first phase but the turnkey will occur in a regular classroom, should the facilities costs be included in the analysis? What school system project administration costs should be allocated to the contractor's performance contract project? The problems are formidable, yet manageable, if proper planning and cost reporting requirements are implemented.

3. The third step will be based largely upon elements drawn from the analysis of Steps No. 1 and 2. Through cost analysis the actual relationships will be determined between various cost factors, such as salaries, utilization of overhead, student flow and throughput, etc. Over the last two years a general model has been refined which may provide some assistance in determining cost trade-offs and sensitivity analyses. Dubbed the COST-ED model (for COSt of Schools, Training, and EDucation), it highlights the critical cost factors and variables in an instructional system and simplifies investigation of the interactions among them.

The analytical concept upon which the model is based appears in Figure 1. Important aspects of the design scheme are: use of "cost per unit of student achievement" as the final summary statistic; relation of all costs to one of a set of "functions" chosen on the basis of usefulness

Figure 1

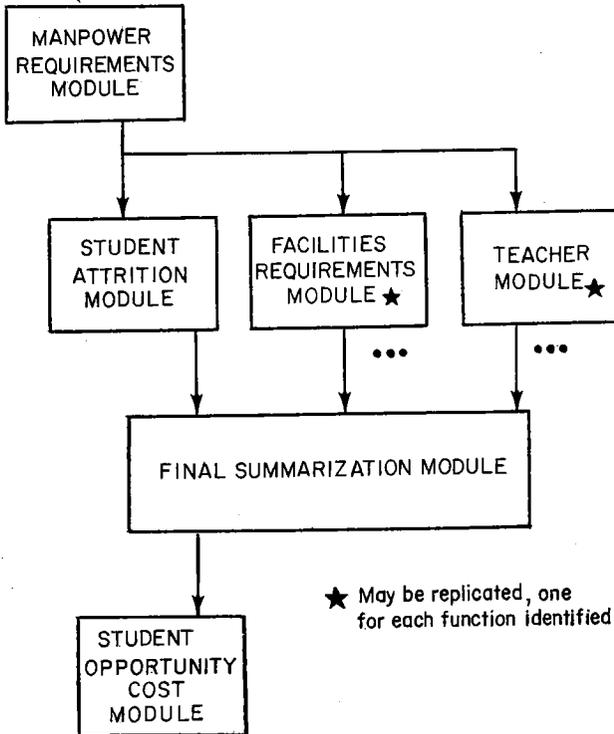
Design Scheme for  
COST-ED Model



*The model relates over 50 isolated cost factors to each other according to the scheme here depicted so that the impact of each on the ultimate "cost per unit student achievement" may easily be identified.*

Figure 2

The Six Modules  
of the COST-ED Model



for each application; division of resources consumed into "enabling" and "operating" categories; provisions for the charging of costs on time-dependent and unit bases; and identification of "opportunity costs." The model is designed primarily for use in analyzing the projected economic characteristics of a new instructional system being proposed. Through translation of available budget and accounting statistics into the model framework, however, it may also be employed to discover the underlying economic relationships in an existing instructional system. Figure 2 shows the basic modules which comprise the model, each of which may or may not be used in a particular application, depending upon the organizational environment, the objectives of the analysis, and the level of detail desired.

4. Based on the results of the COST-ED model or a similar management tool for determining cost analyses of both the contractor-operated program and the existing school system, the various administrative changes and other costs of implementing the contractor-operated program during the turnkey phase into the school will be determined. The results will affect questions such as the following:

a. Should the contractor's program be made available to all students in specific grade levels or to students in various quartiles, for example, the lowest quartile? The school system should take into account here political implications, such as being accused of implementing a track system in a racially torn school system, or the problem of stigmatizing certain children.

b. Can the school system justify the expansion and continuation of the contractor's program upon turnkey after the federal funds and federal support are phased out? A properly planned program with specified conditions in the RFP will encourage contractors to develop programs with low operating costs and other characteristics which would tend to allow the school system to operate the program for long periods of time. Key items are the amount of consumable instructional materials, the labor intensity of the instructional approach, the recurring need for inservice and teacher training and retraining, and the obsolescence of equipment and materials plus guarantees of future contracts for both. If proper cost analyses are made and the school is willing to make changes conditional upon the contractor's guarantee during the turnkey, it is very likely that many school systems will be able to justify increased costs incurred during the initial turnkey phases by cost savings elsewhere. For example, if a grade level can be

guaranteed in approximately a third of the year, then only a third of the equipment and materials will be required over the entire school year, with an increase of throughput by a factor of three. This will tend to reduce the amortization costs per student achievement, as well as the time involved. If other low cost programs can be provided by the school, such as extended physical education, work-study experiences and enrichment programs, then it is conceivable that the total operating budget can be less after turnkey than prior to it.

### Summary

In summary, the turnkey process provides vitally needed leverage for a school superintendent to deal with the requisite costs of administrative charges and political problems created by the infusion of a new instructional and management system through performance contracting. He will have the opportunity to present real and credible alternatives to the school board. The board, in its policy-making position, will know the costs and the benefits of alternative approaches, including the existing public school system, and will understand the conditions necessary for effectiveness to be guaranteed during and after the turnkey. Thus, the turnkey can be conducted in the most effective manner, allowing the school system to realize to the greatest extent possible the levels of performance demonstrated during the first year's cycle.

The turnkey phase is vital if performance contracting is to realize its full potential. Performance contracting is not an end in itself—although it might be thus viewed by corporations seeking new markets and school officials seeking easy answers. Performance contracting is the means to enable our public school system to renew itself by learning what is successful and under what conditions success can continue to be enjoyed.

It is neither wise nor desirable to see our public school system fragmented into endless contractor-operated centers, each competing under so-called performance contracts, with no managerial system to protect the school or the student or the taxpayer. This is what might happen, though, if schools try to jump into this process too quickly. The immediate effect might be the psychological boost that always accompanies participation in a fad, but the long range effect would be to destroy our public schools. For our schools to save themselves, they must adopt a new managerial environment, not just a new technology.