

# ISSS Integrated Systemic Inquiry Primer Project (ISIPP)

## A TASTE OF SYSTEMICS

Edited by Tom Mandel

Excerpted from "Systems Design is Powerful Tool for Changing Education" The Sunday Herald Sept 11. 1994

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Written by Bela Banathy

"While an unchanging dominant majority is perpetually rehearsing its own defeat, fresh challenges are evoking fresh creative responses from newly recruited minorities, which proclaims their own creative power by rising, each time, to the occasion."

Arnold Toynbee

### INTRODUCTION

In a 1983 national commission report, "A Nation at Risk," a great educational crisis in the performance of American schools is described. I contend that the educational crisis we have been talking about for the past decade is not a crisis of performance, but a crisis of perception; a perception of what education should be and how we can create "what should be."

**"...not a crisis of performance, but a crisis of perception."**

...Many of us share a realization that today's schools are far from being able to do justice to the education of future generations. There is growing awareness that the current design of many of our social systems, including education, is totally out of synch with the new realities of the post-industrial information/knowledge era. These realities touch the lives of every person, family, community and nation; and -- to a great extent -- define the future of humanity.

Today, however, we are faced with a change in the nature of change. Constantly emerging new realities and massive transformations call for changing and transforming the whole system, requiring new thinking and the creation of new norms and expectations that embody the changed realities. They call for the redesign of our educational systems and the design of new systems of learning and human development.

People in our social systems are not yet aware of the potential and power of systems design. Today, education in design and expertise in design is limited to a few technical professions.

But when it comes to the design of a social systems, we who inhabit those systems are the experts, When it comes to the design of educational systems, the right to design is shared by those who serve the system, who are served by it and who are affected by it, It is this shared responsibility for design that makes a system authentic and sustainable, Furthermore, each and every community is unique. It becomes the task of each and every community to design its own unique educational system.

Nobody has the right to design an educational system, or and social system, for someone else. The age of social engineering by an outside expert is over. We have arrived a the age of "user-designers." "The age of social engineering by an outside expert is over."

A precondition of engaging in educational design is the development of competence among "user-designers" that enables them to design their own system, The attainment of such competence is what makes empowerment a reality. Only the attainment of such competence will enable us to chose our destiny and shape our future. Without it empowerment is just an empty word, nothing more than political rhetoric. Thus we have to create opportunities and programs for design learning, for the development of design competence...

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I --  
I took the road less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference,"  
Robert Frost.

Our educational communities have reached such a juncture. We have a choice. We can continue to travel on the well known road of our present practices. We can continue to try to fix the parts, make piecemeal adjustment in the existing system, hoping that somehow we shall "get by." Or we can take the less traveled road so that we can make a difference.

Choosing this road means transcending our old ways of thinking and learning NEW WAYS of seeing and thinking, breaking our old mindsets and framing new ones, unloading the baggage of past practices and learning how to design and build new systems of learning and human development. There is no more important and challenging task, no more noble calling than participating in the design of just systems of learning and human development for future generations.

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