

Michael Fullan

CHANGE
FORCES

The
Sequel



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Change Forces: The Sequel

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For Vince and Mary

Preface

The original *Change Forces* hit a responsive chord (Fullan, 1993). Using a combination of new theories (in particular, chaos theory) and insights from our own and others' change projects around the world, I identified novel insights and better ways of comprehending overloaded and fragmented educational reform. I criticized and called into question key concepts such as vision and strategic planning, site-based management, strong leadership, collegiality and consensus, accountability and assessment. Not that these ideas were all wrong; rather they contributed to superficial thinking.

It is time now to move even deeper into the analysis and action implications of studying the dynamics of change forces in educational reform. The field is richer in theory and more sophisticated in empirical investigation than it was five years ago. *Change Forces: The Sequel* focuses on the exciting progress that has been made very recently in thinking about and strategizing about organizational and policy reform. As before, myths are debunked and new insights are advanced. We will see that the concept of moral purpose—improvements designed to make a difference in the lives of students—is not as straightforward as it seems. We will unlock the black box of why collaborative cultures really work, and what it takes to sustain them. We will see that break-throughs occur when we begin to think of conflict, diversity and resistance as positive, absolutely essential forces for success. We will probe deeply into the role of knowledge inside learning organizations, as well as knowledge and outside connections. We will learn from chaos and complexity theory, and evolutionary theory that learning occurs on the edge of chaos, where a delicate balance must be maintained between too much and too little structure. We will understand that 'anxiety containing' strategies are essential under such circumstances. We will appreciate how 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' orientations to change at the school level must come together. We will also unpack the problem of transferability—why obvious good ideas do not get used by others, and how to reframe the matter so that larger-scale change becomes possible. Finally, we will

come to appreciate the essential fusion of intellectual, political and spiritual forces.

As before, I draw heavily on new business books on organizational learning. Although that literature as a whole suffers from superficiality, there are some absolute gems of studies that have profound implications for change in school systems. I have learned also from several large-scale change evaluation studies. Over the past few years, we have been engaged in the study of the Holmes Group for the Ford Foundation, the evaluation of the Building Infrastructure for Professional Development project for Rockefeller, the assessment of the Learning Labs initiative for the National Education Association and the Manitoba School Improvement Program for the Gordon Foundation. All of these studies and others have been great wellsprings of knowledge about change forces. I thank, in particular, Nancy Watson who has been my co-investigator in most of these endeavors.

As to the scope of applicability of the book, I do draw on North American literature and cases for most of the specific examples and illustrations. Our work in different parts of the world does, however, provide evidence of a much more comprehensive relevance. The core concepts are applicable across the world, whether we consider Eastern Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and other places where dynamic change has been studied. My apologies for not doing justice to this international research, but my familiarity with North America is more conducive to using clear examples of complex concepts from this source. Be that as it may, I do use references from work in other parts of the world. The lessons of change forces are indeed a worldwide phenomenon.

Writing is always a source of development of new ideas as well as dissemination. One series has been particularly stimulating, namely the *What's Worth Fighting For trilogy* with my colleague Andy Hargreaves, which we did for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (Fullan, 1997; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998), and the corresponding video, which captures this work in several cities in North America—Toronto, Winnipeg, Chicago and New Orleans (Video Journal of Education, 1998).

Understanding change is just as much a matter of 'doing' reform as it is studying it. I have been fortunate to be part of several living laboratories' of change. The longstanding Learning Consortium in Ontario, the more recent Peel University Partnership, and the Manitoba School Improvement Program have been three vital examples of partnerships within which we have both accomplished significant improvements while learning more about the complexities and dynamics of change.

Perhaps even more telling is the transformation of higher education in which I have been engaged as Dean in two evolving situations over the past decade. First, at the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto we tried to practice what we preach about change as we immersed ourselves in the renewal of that faculty over the 1988–96 period (Fullan, 1998). More recently, the merger of the latter faculty with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has provided us with the ultimate living laboratory of complex reform. The new institution, called OISE/UT, started in July 1996 and represents the combined merger of almost 200 education faculty, more than 150 administrative staff, 9,000 students ranging across pre-service, in-service and graduate programs, two lab schools and several field centers across the Province of Ontario. Developing a new culture from two previous cultures, decertification of unions involving overlapping membership, massive reorganization and new leadership have given all of us daily firsthand experience with the forces of change. I have learned a great deal about change from my colleagues in this large-scale renewal as we are engaged in developing the capacities of a complex higher education organization to play a significant partnership role in improving educational systems.

I have been blessed, then, with multifaceted occasions to revel in dynamic change situations. My colleagues at home and abroad are too numerous to mention, but I thank them all for the privilege of learning with them. The one exception who I will name is the late Matt Miles. For years Matt was my full-time mentor and part-time tormentor (as he demanded ever more clarity of thinking). The field suffers from the loss of this superb student of change, and I miss him greatly.

My thanks also to Joan Domonchuk who prepared the manuscript under very tight timelines, and to Andy Hargreaves and Blair Mascall for their comments.

As I look ahead, I am excited to say that *Change Forces* will also become a trilogy. The current publication, *Change Forces: The Sequel* will be followed in 2001 with the third entry, *Change Forces with a Vengeance* (an appropriate title for the new millennium). We are at such an early stage of new developments that the next few years should continue to yield rich new insights.

Finally, my change team at home continues to thrive, always supportive and lovingly demanding. Thank you Wendy, Bailey and Conor—may the forces of change continue to be with you.