

Book Review

Title of Book:	The New Meaning of Educational Change
Author:	Michael Fullan
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City:	New York, America
Reviewers:	Nadira Ahmed, Imran Moriani & Zameer Maznani

The book *The New Meaning of Educational Change* fourth edition is written by Michael Fullan in 2007 and it was published by The Teachers College Press, New York, America. There are total 353 pages in the book and the price of the book is \$115. Micheal Fullan's book *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (Fullan, 2007) tells a reader everything about educational change. The first edition of the book was released in 1981 and it was about challenges about change, the second edition was released in 1991 and it is about considering individual situations and organizations that influence the process of change, in the third edition released in 2001, working on coherence was given importance to deal with reforms. The fourth edition of the book is about the applied nature of the work which indicates the combination of theory (meaning) and practice (action) for sustainable improvement. The book also emphasis on motivating change agents to find meaning from shared actions. Like in other editions, Fullan offers a comprehensive view of education change with depth and understanding of the complexities that are prevailing in authority, vision, and passion.

Fullan says that from the last three decades a number of confused attempts were made to reform the education system. In this book, he shares powerful lessons about how to cope with and influence educational change. He has explained why change processes work in the way that they do and to identify what has to be done to improve the success rate by compiling best theory and practice. The book is divided into three parts.

The part I of the book consists of six chapters which conceptualize educational change as a sociopolitical process in which all kinds of individuals, classrooms, schools, local, regional and national factors are involved to work interactively. A real change can be brought by bringing change in practices, touching people emotions and this can be done by changing material (curriculum), behaviors (new teaching approaches), and

beliefs (alteration of assumptions). Among all these three, “change in beliefs and understanding are the foundations of achieving lasting reform” (p.37). Furthermore, an emphasis is given on building local capacity and developing a shared vision and strategy to bring educational change. Fullan describes that many problems in educational change occur due to difficulties in planning and coordinating. Fullan describes factors affecting implementation process of educational change in three categories. The first is an innovation which answers the questions like need, clarity, complexity, and quality of educational change. The latter two categories are described extensively in part II and part III of the book.

Part II of the book has something for every change agent at the local level. Each chapter of part II discusses the role, position, and complexities of teachers, principals, students, district, and community because they are the crucial stakeholders and their participation is important in education. With regard to teachers, it is mentioned in the book that “Educational change depends on what teachers do and think” (p.129). Fullan highlights that a positive relationship between principal and teacher play an equally important role in bringing small educational change. In one of the chapters of this book, the writer says that students are mostly neglected in educational change, planning even they are not thought of change process (p.170). He emphasizes that change is always about people, so students are the main part of the change. Moreover, the author says in this book that for educational change we have to involve community and parents because they are the main beneficiaries of the education process. The writer states that parents’ involvement in the educational process is compulsory and beneficial for students’ achievement (p.189). In the book, district administrators’ picture shown by Michael Fullan is more positive. According to him, they are good negotiators and lead effectively. They are decision makers and mediators who face conflictual situations on a daily basis which affect the entire school district.

Part III of the book is about change at the regional and national level. Fullan defines the role of government in the course of change is to push accountability, give incentives in the form of pressure and support and foster capacity building. On the way towards educational change, it is not enough to hire good people in the profession, but also giving opportunities for capacity building to those who are already in the field. Large scale improvement of the schools is possible when teachers are recruited, rewarded and retained. Besides the professional development of the teachers, there needs to enhance the professional learning of them as well. This professional learning is all about their development of habits for learning. In the last chapter of the book, Michael Fullan stresses that certain change comes if the existing conditions are normal (p. 301). When people do the right work in existing conditions, the change is sure to come. Further, he says that large scale change comes when teachers, principals, administrators,

and the state think about improvement out of their boxes. The ultimate goal of change is the success of the whole system rather than any individual.

This new edition of Micheal Fullan's book was released because of an updated idea about cognitive science which says that learning is meaning-making and when people do not find meaning in anything then they resist change. Fullan concludes the book with the sentence "Meaning is motivation; motivation is energy; energy is engagement; engagement if life" (p. 303) which depicts how much he values a sense of ownership by different stakeholders in educational change.

The book is rooted in participative leadership and transformative leadership. The writer uses a participative leadership perspective in the book as he says all the stakeholders of the school should be involved in bringing change (p.28). Moreover, he believes that it is even difficult to make a small change without involving the group (p. 37). In this book, the author mostly focuses on the effectiveness and improvement of an organization through democratic values (p.60); greater power should not be given to one person (p. 69); for any concrete change, the participation of teachers and students is a key factor. Further, he states teachers should own the things for achieving goals and they should take a small decision (p.153).

Michael Fullan is seen to be supporting transformational leadership by the way he highlights the importance of crucial stakeholders to see the meaning for the implementation of change. The author is promoting transformational leadership by saying that capacity building is very important. According to him, through professional development teachers can be enabled to learn leadership in communities and become future leaders (p. 235). At another place, he is indicating the role of a transformational leader and says that good and wise leadership is not only to make wise decisions but it is about energizing the people to make wise decisions (p. 300).

Michael Fullan writes that the current book is "more action-based and contains more of my own assessment and interpretation of what is happening". The book is written with well-craft examples, combined with research, meaningful anecdotes, and practical applications. Fullan has given reference to a number of studies on change, school leadership, and improvement, professional education, large-scale reform, social movement, policies, stakeholders, etc. In addition to this, he has also quoted different case studies in chapter 11 of school districts to engage all schools into reforms. Likewise, to justify the too tight/too loose problem, Fullan has quoted how whole school reform was failed in the United States and how people did not show interest in "No Child Left Behind" movement because of not seeing meaning in it (p.10). However, the book could have been more effective if it utilizes a statistical source of any reform which is successful or fails. Also, the facts and figures could have been given to support the point of view of the author with evidence for validity and objectivity of arguments.

This book is highly effective to read for such leaders of educational organizations who miserably fail in bringing and consolidating the change process. It is equally important for the teachers to go through this book in detail so as to know their part in the change process and in complex school systems. Fullan has effectively highlighted major educational change problems which happen in most of the contexts, and he has successfully engaged readers with different aspect by providing insightful and anecdotes. The book is packed with lots of critical information related to change which requires reflecting and relating with our own context to see what actually happens. For those of us focused on educating, researching, helping, and driving school and educational system change, Michael Fullan has filled in as pioneer, guide, and tutor.

Reference

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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