



education review // reseñas educativas

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a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

November 20, 2010

ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>

Fullan, Michael. (2010). *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Pp. xii+114

ISBN 978-1-4129-7873-6

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In *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform* Michael Fullan tackles whole-system reform in a practical manner that provides educational leaders and policy makers a proven approach focused on improving the whole system. In this book, the author examines successful school reform initiatives in three different countries, actions and conditions that resulted in taking steps toward whole-system reform, ways to avoid common pitfalls in action, funding, and current policies. Throughout the book, he emphasizes the concept of *collective capacity* as the key to *All Systems Go* and the component most likely neglected.

Michael Fullan is a well-published international leader on educational change that has developed numerous partnerships designed to bring about school improvement. The addition of Peter Senge writing the foreword and

Citation: Lopez, Jaime. (2010 November 20) Review of *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform* by Michael Fullan. *Education Review*, 13. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev994.pdf>

supporting *All Systems Go* adds validity to this approach. Peter Senge is the director of the Center for Organizational Learning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sloan School of Management, and is known as the author of the *Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*.

The book is divided into three parts that focus on the current state of education at all levels, the steps to implement *All Systems Go*, and looks ahead at a new era. Part One: The System, examines the current state of education at the school, district, state, national, and global levels. In Chapter One, Fullan sketches the idea of what system reform looks like, and the big ideas in the book. They include: First, organizations must believe that all students can learn at a high level of critical reasoning and problem-solving" (p.4). Second, every successful organization focuses on a small number of priorities and does them well. Third, successful school's have "resolute leadership" that keeps the organization focused on its mission, and influence others to follow. Fourth, *collective capacity* is the hidden resource that we often fail to recognize and to cultivate. He elaborates on collective capacity in Chapter Three. Fifth, strategies with precision are vital to implement change within a short period. Sixth, calls for the implementation of intelligent accountability. Intelligent accountability calls for a set of policies and practices that increase individual and collective capacity to the point that it is shared among all stakeholders. Finally, all means all. You cannot implement whole-system reform without including all aspects of the system in change.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) reports that out of every 100 ninth grade students, only 40 are enrolled in college, 27 enrolled for their second year in college, and only 18 will graduate from college. The figures are even worse for minorities. The impact on the individuals and society is enormous. Meanwhile, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Program for International Student Assessment, in the 1960's the United States was first in the world in terms of the number of adults with high school qualifications, but by the 1990's the country dropped to 13th place. In 1995, the United States was number one in secondary graduation rates and by 2005 they dropped to

13th place. It is important to note in 1995 and through 2005 they were number one in spending per pupil (Schleicher, 2009a).

In Chapter Two, Fullan emphasizes that education should consist of higher order thinking skills for all in the system, and advocates for a small number of instructional priorities to include a movement towards deeper skills and “application to functioning in dynamic societies of the future” (p.20). Second, the term *resources* refers to school funding, and this solution of whole school reform does not require more funding, but calls for a more sophisticated conception of school funding. Third, he outlines the *Elements of Successful Reform*. They include: “a small number of ambitious goals, a guiding coalition at the top, high standards and expectations, collective capacity building with a focus on instruction, individual capacity building linked to instruction, mobilizing the data as a strategy for improvement, intervention in a nonpunitive manner, being vigilant about ‘distractors,’ and being transparent, relentless, and increasingly challenging” (p.21).

He criticizes the 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and points out that these strategies waste resources and actually cause dysfunctional outcomes. He cited Grubbs (2009) who notes that NCLB has placed more pressure on schools and has driven schools to adopt quick fix programs in the place of programs than enhance teacher capacity.

In Part One The System, Fullan presents a compelling case in support of system-wide reform. His critique of educational reform such as NCLB gives its proponents a new perspective on the impact it has had in education and its detractors one more reason to oppose the reform effort.

In Part Two: Getting There, takes a look at four examples of successful whole district reform, and presents the five things leaders must remember in *All Systems Go*. Chapter Three, examines four examples of whole-district reform: Tower Hamlets in London, England; Long Beach Unified School District in California; York Region District School Board in Toronto; and Ottawa Catholic District in Ontario. They all displayed an attention to clarity of purpose, collaborative cultures, collective inquiry, action orientation, commitment to improvement; focus on results,

leaders who empowered others, willingness to face adversity, and perseverance in the face of obstacles.

In Chapter Four, Fullan discusses the five components of *All Systems Go*. First, moral purpose and high expectations must be included in all the components of whole school reform. Moral purpose focuses on raising the bar, high expectations for all, and closing the gap for all children in society relative to those skills essential for surviving and thriving in a complex global society, and specifies the key standards relating to literacy, numeracy, and 21st-century skills. Second, resolute leadership is about purpose and action. They are the ones that keep the organization on focus, especially through rough times. Third, intelligent accountability incorporates the notion that people respond better to carrots than sticks, meaning they avoid risks, and are more prepared when they have access to information about how their behavior compares to others. Fourth, *collective capacity* building, according to Fullan, is the concept that makes *All Systems Go*. It enables ordinary people to accomplish great things because their knowledge of effective practice becomes readily available and accessible, and working together generates commitment. Fifth, individual capacity, commonly overestimated by policymakers as a catalyst that can change the culture of the teaching profession, is a part of the solution, but not the solution. It must coincide with collective strategies and work in synergy to be strong enough to change systems.

In Chapter Five, Fullan criticizes individualistic strategies such as merit pay for teachers because the evidence shows that it consistently fails to improve student performance. Fullan calls for the combining of individual and collective strategies with particular emphasis on the latter to make whole school reform of reality. Johnson (2004) conducted a study to find out how to keep quality teachers, and found that a teacher having a mentor by itself has no relationship to job satisfaction and retention, meanwhile teachers that work in a school with an integrated professional culture was strongly related to job satisfaction. Fullan emphasizes to policy makers that in order to make a quality teaching profession a reality, they need to know that a child's teacher makes all the difference, every teacher must be good, it takes many teachers, and policies must bring it all together to make a difference.

In Part Two, Fullan unveils the five components of *All Systems Go* and presents four real life examples of this approach in practice. His bold statement, "the solution is not a program: it is a small set of common principles and practices relentlessly pursued. Focused practitioners, not programs, drives success" (p.59), further echoes his claims that the key to fixing the problem begins with the professionals that make up the field.

Part Three: A New Era, takes a look at the future in educational reform and complicates the movement by adding the human elements that exist in a democratic society as barriers. If we can find a way to meet these groups' self-interests, then people will rise to the bigger purpose. He challenges us to get organized and bring value to education and calls for the unity between politicians and professionals.

The recent commitment to the following four goals by the National Education Association (NEA): recruit and prepare teachers for high-need schools, take a comprehensive approach to teacher incentives, improve working conditions for teachers, and design teacher effectiveness in broad terms of student learning are steps in the right direction on behalf of this teacher union.

Peter Senge's foreword, preface, and introduction provide a powerful framework that reiterates the message that we must change our schools to improve their effectiveness. Implementing change has been a struggle and a hodgepodge of different reforms has further clouded the field of education. Fullan's *All Systems Go* approach provides leaders a practical and proven approach to accomplish this task.

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