education review // reseñas educativas
editors: david j. blacker / gustavo e. fischman / melissa cast-brede / gene v glass

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

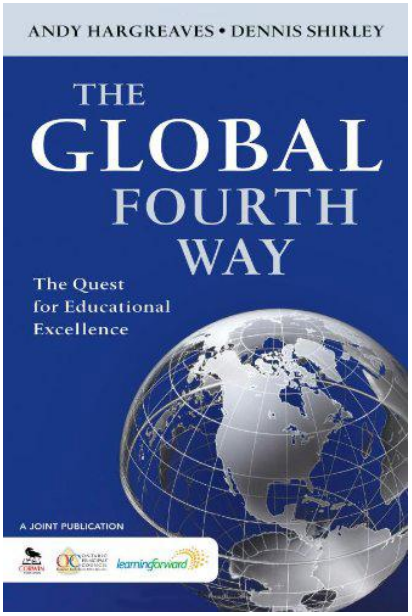
September 12, 2013 ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the
College of Education and Human Services of the University of Delaware
the National Education Policy Center, and the
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University
Follow *Education Review* on Facebook and on Twitter: #EducReview

Hargreaves, Andy, & Shirley, Dennis. (2012). *The Global Fourth Way: The Quest for Educational Excellence.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Pp. 233 ISBN 978-1-4129-8786-8

Reviewed by Helen Janc Malone



Seldom are books written in a way that makes us stop and rethink the dominant narrative in education policy. Hargreaves and Shirley's "fourth way" theory does just that. In their new book, *The Global Fourth Way: The Quest for Educational Excellence*, a sequel to their 2009 publication, *The Fourth Way: The Inspiring Future for Educational Change* (Corwin, 2009), the authors explore via six case studies — Finland, Singapore, Alberta, Ontario, England, and California — how societies transform their education systems to support all students. Each of the case studies is designed to illustrate, inspire, and motivate readers to take action for change. The authors

Citation: Malone, Helen Janc. (2013 September 12) Review of *The Global Fourth Way: The Quest for Educational Excellence* by Hargreaves, Andy, & Shirley, Dennis. (2012). *Education Review, 16.* Retrieved [Date] from http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1252.pdf

masterfully weave throughout each case practice-based principles and theoretical constructs as guideposts on how one could think about and conceive change.

The authors open the book by laying out inadequacies of three predominant approaches to educational change that govern(ed) whole-system reform since the 1960s, making their case for the fourth way of change. The authors posit that until the 1980s, the first way of educational reform (circa late 1960s and 1970s), prevalent both in the United States and elsewhere, relied heavily on inputs, isolated teaching, traditional leadership styles, local accountability, and minimal outside influence.

The insufficiency of the first way of educational change gave way to a second approach to change (circa 1980s), one dominated by top-down directives, standards-based solutions, standardizations, budget austerity, choice and competition, deprofessionalization of teaching, and a focus on punitive measures of compliance. The concentration on external accountability continued through the 1990s, bringing forth a third way of educational change, one punctuated with an intent to narrow student achievement gaps, raise the bar for student performance on standardized tests, and lead with data-driven practice, whereby students serve as targets for intervention and service delivery. However, as the authors argue, the first three ways of educational change pushed the educational systems into a hyper-focus on the short-term returns (incremental gains on standardized tests), commoditization of schooling, attacks on the teaching profession, and an over-reliance on technology, all in the name of student learning. Yet, the educational systems operating in the second or third reform ways have not drastically improved learning, particularly when considering students' post-secondary outcomes.

Based on their work in international benchmarking, Hargreaves and Shirley reject the first three ways of educational reform, offering instead a new approach to educational change, the fourth way, exemplified by: an inspiring and shared moral purpose; public engagement and community development; moral economy; student engagement and voice; personalized learning; teachers

as change-makers; responsive teaching; evidence-informed professional learning communities; systemic and sustainable leadership; community-focused networks; and personal and professional responsibility for student learning. They encourage us to go beyond standardized measures of schooling, to think critically about lessons we can draw from other nations, and to embrace disciplined innovation, one that shift us "from the government driving and delivering services, to a position where it creates platforms so that people can support themselves" (p. 29).

The bulk of the book is dedicated to six case studies designed to illustrate the "fourth way" of educational change. Each case balances practical experiences of educational transformation with theoretical principles and take-away lessons. To the authors, Finland represents an ideal fourth way case, followed by Singapore, Alberta, and Ontario, who embrace the principles of the fourth way of educational change while still engaging in strong data-driven accountability systems. England and California conclude the case studies, serving as illustrative examples of potential challenges and uncertainties faced by fourth way leaders who operate within the confines of second or third way systems. Below I summarize some of the guiding points from the case studies that collectively bring forth a theoretical and practice-based argument for a wide adaptation and implementation of the fourth way principles.

Finland, exemplified by 3Ps — professionalism, participation, and persistence — represents to Hargreaves and Shirley the pinnacle fourth way model of educational change. Well known for its chart-topping Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores, Finland has grabbed international attention for its commitment to shared responsibility, investment in professional capital, and a student-centered model of learning. Primarily, it has transformed its lackluster system by continuously investing in its professional capital. Teachers are rigorously trained through research universities, prepared to be both autonomous leaders within their classrooms and to engage with colleagues in collective problem-solving and instructional innovation. The prestige teaching now holds in the

Finnish society leads to respect of teachers by the public and trust in the local educational decision-making. And, while many nations are looking for a way to outcompete other countries on international tests, what has made Finland stand out, according to the authors, is its own pursuit of an inspiring dream, deeply embedded in its historical, cultural, and socio-economic constructs.

Singapore illustrates another country that has utilized fourth way principles to strengthen its educational system to become one of the international student performance leaders. Hargreaves and Shirley title the chapter by the Singapore's guiding principles — innovation, communication, and paradox. Unlike Finland, Singapore has a centralized education system, one universal teacher-training program, and a strong focus on data-driven external accountability. Yet, the country also embraces localized innovation and application of technology, personalized learning, and holistic education. As the authors explain, "Communication is the catalyst; culture is the key" (p. 89). Like its long-standing vision, "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation," the country artfully balances its culture with innovation, deep learning with technology, centralized governance and decentralized implementation.

The book's next two cases come from Canada, Alberta and Ontario. The two provinces are particularly notable to the United States readers, as Canada much more closely resembles the U.S. socio-cultural and structural factors of schooling than Finland or Singapore. Yet, both provinces exemplify similarities to the first two noted examples; they invest in their professional capital and work to build capacity and change from the bottom-up. Alberta illustrates this point.

In 1999, Alberta proposed a School Performance Incentive Plan designed to financially reward teachers that boost students' test scores. The Alberta's teachers union strongly rejected the plan noting that such incentive structure would create unhealthy competition, instead proposing an implementation of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI), a bottom-up approach to change that focuses on four dimensions: (a)

vertical – active trust in teachers from the top; (b) lateral – focus on building professional learning communities; (c) radial – outside-in and inside-out improvement and engagement; and (d) temporal – attention on both medium and long-term goals. As Hargreaves and Shirley show, this form of "innovation with improvement," lead to higher student performance while also empowering teachers. As the authors conclude, "When teachers are empowered to design and develop their own innovations that they feel have the potential to really improve student learning, then changes in beliefs can and do actually precede changes in practice" (p. 105).

The other Canadian example is that of Ontario. However, as opposed to focusing on the school reform strategies that have been well-documented elsewhere in the broader literature, Hargreaves and Shirley illuminate instead the Ontario's Education for All (EfA) initiative designed to create inclusive, interactive education that orients attention on the local diversity and support for student with disabilities. Launched by the Ontario Ministry of Education in 2005, the EfA was designed to ensure that all students could succeed through universal design, differentiated instruction, evidence-based practice, fairness, and teacher investments. Through a concentration on substance, inclusive pedagogy, assisting technology, and professional learning communities, Ontario was able to see tangible results and narrowing of the achievement gaps on standardized reading and writing tests between traditional and special education students. Although the authors dubbed Ontario a 3.5 on the four point scale (four being a full fourth way implementation), they illustrate how investment in a moral economy and inspiring beliefs about students, coupled with political support, professional engagement, and an integrated strategy can make a difference in the lives of students.

The last two cases are designed to warn of the challenges fourth way education thinkers face in second or third way systems. Chapter 7 follows an English school under a subheading, "inspiration, responsiveness, and sustainability." Focused on one majority immigrant school, Grange Secondary School, the case study centers on how committed school leaders

increased student performance by engaging the local community in the school and utilizing students' personal interests and culture as a gateway to deeper learning. Although the school has over the past decade offered an extraordinary turnaround in students' grades, attendance, and scholastic readiness, primarily due to what the authors refer to as "courageous, culturally responsive leadership," the school was shut down by the district's reorganization plans and reopened as a charter school without the community and cultural focus that made its successful in recent past. Hargreaves and Shirley use this case to illustrate the obstacles fourth way school leaders face in districts operated by second way reforms dominated by external accountability and standardization of learning.

Chapter 8 and the book's last case study features the California Teachers' Association's (CTA) effort to support underserved communities through equitable funding and resources distribution. The chapter, dubbed as "professional organizing for public good," tracks the role unions, litigation, and gubernatorial politics play in securing resources for underserved students. Hargreaves and Shirley argue that it was the Quality Education Investment Act (Prop 98) statewide network of schools, backed by the CTA, that enabled underserved populations to receive interventions (such as reduced class size, qualified teachers) that increased student learning, brought families back to their local schools (and away from competing charter schools), and strengthened the younger teachers' resolve in the CTA. The authors argue that teachers' unions can be a powerful vehicle for promoting fourth way principles when they exhibit professional and political capital, courageous leadership, innovation and improvement, intensive interaction, culture of inquiry, and a recognition of professionals as intellectuals.

Hargreaves and Shirley use the six cases to illustrate the fourth way principles in practice and to summarize the pillars of such change in their concluding chapter. What they advocate for is educational change on all levels of the system, one focused on an inspiring dream, collective responsibility, system learning, professional capacity building, communication, collaboration, and innovation. What the cases do not fully address

however, are the barriers, alternative problem definitions, or competing solutions proposed by policy entrepreneurs that the noted fourth way exemplars had to overcome. For instance, the authors note in their concluding chapter that the fourth way systems do not subscribe to the centralization of educational power, emergence of charters, alternative teacher certification programs, standardization, or top-down sanctions of teachers. However, the authors do not delve deep into the political, cultural, economic, and systemic conditions that helped the noted examples embrace the fourth way of educational change. Furthermore, given that the fourth way approach appears dominant only in a handful of nations, a reader is left wondering why such an approach, which appears to create optimal conditions to rich learning experiences, has not appeared germane to the public or gained considerable political viability worldwide.

This skepticism could certainly be expected from the United States school reformers who would point to the American exceptionalism and the labor market arguments as justifications for the existing system of school improvement. From the Hargreaves and Shirley's perspective, the U.S. is idling in the second way of reforms, achieving no improvement and no innovation, points that would likely be disputed by those who view Teach for America, Race to the Top grants, or the Common Core strategies as promising innovations. Although the book offers inspirational illustrations of system-level change, skeptics of international comparisons would likely point that the book does not offer a critical analysis of how nations engaged in the second or third way of educational change could overcome the institutional inertia and political realities in order to create conditions for the fourth way of change. In the American context, such discourse would entail challenging debates about personal vs. collective responsibility for learning opportunities, professionalization of the teaching force vs. a market-based approach to alternative certifications, the role of high-stakes standardized testing vs. teacher-driven evaluations of student knowledge, and the role and place of teacher unions vs. privatization of schooling, among others.

A starting point perhaps would be to engage in a national exercise answering three salient questions posed by the two authors: What kind of excellence are we looking for? What sorts of success or high performance should we value? And, what kinds of change are we trying to achieve? One set of answers resides in what the authors so eloquently conclude their book with:

To follow the Global Fourth Way and constantly strive for greater excellence is to believe that children's minds can always be stretched further and that what we now offer privileged students can be made available to all students. It is to believe that each of us, throughout our entire careers, can keep on improving our own professional practice and make the lives of our young people and the world they will inherit a better place. (p. 202)

About the Reviewer



Helen Janc Malone is an educational researcher focused on education policy, system-level change, and expanded learning. Select recent publications include *Leading Educational Change: Global Issues, Challenges, and Lessons on Whole-System Reform* (Teachers College Press, 2013), The Search Stage (*Journal of School Counseling), The Futures of School Reform* (Harvard Education Press, 2012, book chapter), *Lead the Change Series* (American Educational Research Association, 2012), and *Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities* (Jossey-Bass, 2011). She received her M.A. from University of Maryland and her Ed.M. and Ed.D. from Harvard University, all focused on education policy and leadership.

Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the *Education Review*.

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the
College of Education and Human Services of the University of Delaware
The National Education Policy Center http://nepc.colorado.edu, and the
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University



Editors
David J. Blacker
blacker@edrev.info
Gustavo Fischman
fischman@edrev.info
Melissa Cast-Brede
cast-brede@edrev.info
Gene V Glass
glass@edrev.info

Follow *Education Review* on 

Facebook and on Twitter:  #EducReview