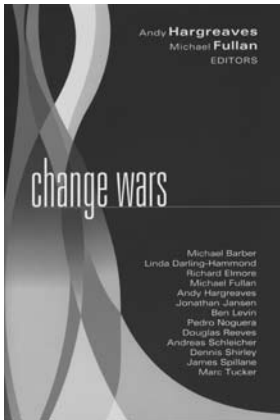


# CHANGE WARS

Andy Hargreaves  
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Editors

*Give me a good theory of action over a strategic plan any day of the week.*

Michael Fullan



*Change Wars* is the third volume in the Leading Edge series published through Solution Tree. Its focus is on the theories-in-action of leading thinkers and change agents in education from around the world. The 13 educators/researchers who have contributed to this resource offer a variety of ways to consider change. Many of the authors are familiar to us: Andy Hargreaves, Michael Fullan, Sir Michael Barber, Richard F. Elmore, Douglas Reeves and Ben Levin, Ontario's deputy minister of education. The other authors James P.

Spillane, Jonathan D. Jansen, Pedro A. Noguera, Dennis Shirley, Marc S. Tucker, Andreas Schleicher and Linda Darling-Hammond offer theories-in-action from different perspectives worth pondering.

Each chapter is easily read. None is more than 35 pages in length. It is the type of book where you can read the chapters in any order you wish, depending on your time and interest. It is a great book for discussion groups or book clubs. The authors' e-mail addresses are provided on their biography pages so you can e-mail them if you have a question, comment or concern about their theories.

I resisted the urge to start at the back of the book with Levin and Fullan's chapters. Rather I stayed with the traditional and read each chapter in order. Learning about 13 theories-in-action can seem somewhat overwhelming but as one reads, it becomes clear that each has something to offer that is of value to us in our environment. Jonathan D. Jansen's chapter *When Politics and Emotion Meet: Educational Change in Racially Divided Communities* offers insight into what it is like to enter into an environment occupied by an all-white student and staff population, and integrating black students and staff. He discusses the changes that needed to occur and the emotional and risk-taking challenges that are involved. The challenges he describes are similar to those faced by principals who have experienced the changed demographics of the neighbourhoods that access their schools.

Pedro A. Noguera talks about the issues facing new Americans. He says the immigrant youth arriving in the United States are caught between two worlds; the one they left behind and their adoptive home. They do not fit in either world causing hardships and pressures not understood by the adults in their lives. Noguera suggests several strategies for educators to consider in their efforts to acculturate this new clientele

and shield them from the influence of gangs ready to recruit susceptible youth frustrated with the new culture in which they find themselves.

Industrial benchmarking is Marc Tucker's answer to finding out how to out-perform the best competitors in the field of education. His claim is that the research methods currently employed in education are not suited for informing design. In his chapter Tucker looks at several different education systems and how they differ from the United States. He explains why the techniques and strategies are not transferable to the American system. His premise is that we can learn from them but not copy their systems. There is a need to understand the causal relationships of a successful system and then to adapt their designs to meet the needs of our own particular circumstances. What works in Japan or Finland will not necessarily work in the United States or Canada.

The shortcomings of large-scale reform efforts are discussed in Ben Levin's chapter, *Reform Without (Much) Rancor*. He notes "imposed solutions do not work." His suggestion is an approach that generates real improvement in schools that benefit students while motivating educators and bringing together the support of the broader school community, including students and parents. The approach he describes is the strategy used in Ontario to improve literacy and numeracy. Levin discusses the four key elements in this approach: a plan focussing on student outcomes and founded on evidence; implementing the plan carefully but relentlessly; getting buy-in from stakeholders through effective communications; and managing the distractors and competing pressures.

Fullan uses his Ontario experience as well. He describes his theory of action for whole system improvement. There are six components to his theory for system improvement, most of them familiar to those of us who read his work faithfully. Fullan recommends that where theories-of- action are employed, third party evaluators are needed to provide critical feedback on what the strengths, weaknesses and impact of the strategies were for the system. Like Andreas Schleicher in his chapter on international benchmarking, Fullan sees the merit in participating in the international assessments of student achievement conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has become one of the more popular benchmarks for measuring our successes against those of other member countries.

*Change Wars* is available through Solution Tree - ISBN 978-1-93009-31-4.