

---

# **Change Forces with a Vengeance**

---

Michael Fullan

 **RoutledgeFalmer**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

**Also available as a printed book  
see title verso for ISBN details**

---

## Change Forces with a Vengeance

---

*Change Forces with a Vengeance* is the third book in the chaos theory trilogy (now called complexity theory). The first two books focused on understanding the real complexity of educational reform in action. This book pushes even deeper by providing new insights and lessons of change concerning moral purpose, and what is called tri-level reform – the school and community, the local district and the state. It draws on reform initiatives across many levels and countries so that the ideas are grounded in the reality of actual projects and findings as the forces of change play themselves out within and across the three levels.

*Changing Forces with a Vengeance* is different from the previous two books in one major respect. Instead of being content with understanding complex system dynamics, it takes up the more daunting question of how systems can be changed for the better. It is a humbling proposition because systems don't change all that easily, and complexity theory is the operative paradigm which means that systems can only be 'guided', not 'managed'. By stretching the limits of how the educational system can be changed for the better, exciting new possibilities are identified: what new horizons should we be striving for to improve learning for all children? How can we achieve large-scale reform and do it in a way that the conditions for sustainability are enhanced? What policy levers are needed, and what is the role of new leadership in accomplishing sustainable, comprehensive reform? These questions and more are addressed in ways that are both deeply theoretical, and powerfully practical.

**Michael Fullan** is the Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. He is recognized as an international authority on educational reform. He is engaged in training, consulting and evaluation of change projects around the world. His ideas for managing change are used in many countries and his books have been published in several languages. His *What's Worth Fighting For* trilogy (with Andy Hargreaves), *Change Forces* trilogy, *The New Meaning of Educational Change* and *Leading in a Culture of Change* are widely acclaimed. *Leading in a Culture of Change* won the book of the year award in 2002 from the national Staff Development Council, USA

## **Related Titles**

Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform  
*Michael Fullan*

Change Forces: The Sequel  
*Michael Fullan*

School Leadership and Complexity Theory  
*Keith Morrison*

Leading Learners, Leading Schools  
*Robin Brooke-Smith*

---

# **Change Forces with a Vengeance**

---

Michael Fullan

 **RoutledgeFalmer**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2003  
by RoutledgeFalmer  
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by RoutledgeFalmer  
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003.

*RoutledgeFalmer is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group*

© 2003 Michael Fullan

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Fullan, Michael.

Change forces with a vengeance / Michael Fullan.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Educational change. 2. Educational planning. I. Title

LB2806 .F793 2003

371.2—dc21

2002023993

ISBN 0-203-16580-2 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-26038-4 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-23084-5 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-23085-3 (pbk)

## **Praise for Michael Fullan and *Change Forces with a Vengeance***

This excellent book reveals that Michael Fullan has learnt much from our reform in England as we have learnt from him. *Change Forces with a Vengeance* is a fascinating account at the cutting edge of large scale change.

*Michael Barber*  
*Head, Policy Delivery Unit*  
*Prime Minister Tony Blair's Office, United Kingdom*

*Change Forces with a Vengeance* focuses and deepens our knowledge about large-scale change and improvement in public schools. It leads us into the big questions of how large-scale improvement can be made understandable and tractable, and how the institutional context of public schooling can be changed to support powerful learning for students and teachers.

*Richard F. Elmore*  
*Gregory R. Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership*  
*Graduate School of Education, Harvard University*

Michael Fullan, the world maestro of educational change shows not only how to make change stick but also how to make it spread and last. Cutting edge and controversial as ever, Fullan lets no teacher, leader or government rest on their educational laurels.

*Andy Hargreaves*  
*Thomas More Brennan Chair in Education*  
*Department of Teacher Education, Curriculum and Instruction*  
*Lynch School of Education, Boston College*

In *Change Forces With a Vengeance* Fullan provides a comprehensive analysis of the complexity of large-scale reform together with insights as how to manage it. Fullan's book is enormously helpful. He not only delivers his characteristic insights and action oriented syntheses of the research, but also and more importantly, gives us the inspiration and courage to continue.

*Professor David Hopkins*  
*Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit*  
*Department for Education and Skills, United Kingdom*

Michael Fullan continues to push the envelope of understanding about the change process. With deep insight, he rejects the notion that the larger context in which change efforts take place, is a "state of affairs" or a given that must be understood rather than tampered with. Armed with a commitment to moral purpose and practical examples from his vast on-the-ground experience, Fullan points the way to sustainable transformation in education and beyond.

*Dr Charles E. Pascal*  
*Executive Director, Atkinson Charitable Foundation and*  
*Former Ontario Deputy Minister of Education*

No one involved in education at this time should miss reading this book. Significant change is needed to prepare our children to deal with the knowledge era. This is not the blueprint but the best guide that we have. It is not possible to ignore this book.

*Steve Stanley  
Director, Centre for Excellence in Teaching  
Fremantle, Western Australia*

In this extraordinary book, Michael Fullan hits us squarely with forceful, groundbreaking truth. He is a master at packing ideational density into each sentence. Insight and heart meet up with the power of words. Fullan understands the complexity of sustainable large-scale change as few others do. His words give us a clear, concise, power-packed charge of what we must do if we aim to achieve deeper transferability and sustainable system change. Beautifully written, this book is a must-read for all who are serious about being in the business of education.

*Alice Thomas  
Founder, President and CEO, Center for Development and Learning  
Covington, LA*

With profound insights and practical wisdom *Change Forces with a Vengeance* gives hope and inspiration that real change is not only possible but achievable in our schools. Michael Fullan shows that sustainable system-wide change cannot happen without passion, knowledge, and the courage to change the context in which teachers and students work and learn. For anyone who cares passionately about the future of public education, this is a must read book.

*Rick Lash  
National Director for Management Development  
The HAYGROUP, Canada*

Michael Fullan challenges everyone engaged in educational reform to go down a road not yet traveled because it is not yet made—large scale change in whole system contexts. *Change Forces with a Vengeance* shows why facilitative system contexts are imperative for educational reform and invites us on “an intellectual journey of the highest order.” This exciting book moves the field to a new understanding of what deep, sustainable reform will take and offers grounded advice about how to get there. It is masterful.

*Milbrey McLaughlin  
David Jacks Professor of Education and Public Policy  
Stanford University*

*Change Forces With a Vengeance* is essential reading for anyone interested in school improvement, leadership and learning. It is extremely well written, timely and evocative. Extraordinarily effective.

*John Bransford  
Learning Technology Center, Vanderbilt University, USA*

**For Matt and Michael**  
**Male muses**





---

## Contents

---

<i>List of Figures</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Chapter 1</i> New Horizons	1
<i>Chapter 2</i> Moral Purpose Writ Large	11
<i>Chapter 3</i> New Lessons for Complex Change	21
<i>Chapter 4</i> Tri-Level Reform: The School	39
<i>Chapter 5</i> Tri-Level Reform: The Role of the District	52
<i>Chapter 6</i> Tri-Level Reform: The State	66
<i>Chapter 7</i> Leadership and Sustainability	91
<i>References</i>	107
<i>Index</i>	111

---

## List of Figures

---

Figure 1.1	Results of school reform in England	2
Figure 1.2	Knowledge poor–rich, prescription–judgment matrix	4
Figure 2.1	England: distribution of LEA results	14
Figure 3.1	Complex change lessons	24
Figure 5.1	Theories of education and change	53
Figure 6.1	Generic theory of education	69
Figure 6.2	Three policy sets for educational transformation	71
Figure 7.1	Leading in a culture of change	93

---

## Preface

---

*Change Forces With a Vengeance* is the third book in a second set of trilogies. The evolution is important. The first series — *What's Worth Fighting For* — provided advice for principals and teachers in coping with difficult circumstances (Fullan, 1997; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; and Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). If one looks closely at *What's Worth Fighting For*, the underlying premise was that on any given day the larger "system" may not know what it is doing. Therefore, we argued, don't count on the system but rather carve out your own niche of effectiveness working with others. Our guidelines were in support of this mind and action set. Not a very optimistic orientation on our part, but a practical one.

As I turned to the *Change Forces* trilogy, the attention shifted directly to the system. Using chaos theory (now called complexity theory) as applied to social systems, I tried to make sense of the real complexity of larger entities in action. In the first two books, the emphasis was on *understanding* complexity with a view to coping more effectively with non-linear reform (Fullan, 1993, 1999). *Change Forces With a Vengeance* represents a significant shift. It still focuses on the system and still strives for deeper understanding but inserts a new question: What would the larger system look like if it did know what it was doing?

Put another way, instead of treating the larger context as a given, we start to focus on *changing* the context. The context becomes a dependent variable — something to affect for the better. It is a humbling proposition. Contexts don't change that easily and complexity theory is the operative paradigm which means that systems can't be "managed" and that reforms rarely unfold as intended.

It has become imperative, however, to attempt to affect substantial system change because without the latter you cannot get large-scale, sustainable reform. The focus on large-scale reform became evident in the 1990s. Policymakers became more earnest in their attempt to improve whole systems (districts, states). About the turn of the century many of us have added sustainability because deeper, more lasting

reform is not possible without paying attention to establishing the conditions for continuous reform.

This is an exciting proposition. The stakes are high, the risk is great, the breakthroughs and the yield could be enormously beneficial to society. Fortunately, empirical examples of deliberate attempts at large-scale reform are multiplying, which provides us with living laboratories in which strategizing and inquiry go hand in hand. My colleagues and I rarely do distant research any more. All of our current initiatives are large-scale, developmental, multi-year partnerships with school districts, state departments, provinces and entire countries, and they are taking place around the world. We are applying knowledge as we create it. We are creating knowledge as we apply it. We are changing systems from top to bottom; not in deep ways yet, but the attempts have never been so purposeful and informed. Our partners are increasingly teachers, administrators, policymakers.

All the ideas in this book come from working with others. There are simply too many people to thank by name. Even the number of formal projects is too great to name. The great advantage we have is the different modes of learning that feed into each other. Sometimes it is multi-year training and in-depth workshops, and while it may appear that the training is one-way, you cannot spend 100 hours over the course of a year with a given group of school and district teams without learning more than you give. Other times, it is critical friend consultancies in which you grapple with complex problems in order to tease out ideas that lead to further development in the situation. Still others include evaluation research where we consolidate knowledge while pushing the strategy envelope.

I thank all my academic and field-based colleagues for the learning and hope that they have given over the years. The ideas in this book have been developed collectively with this or that individual, team or larger group. I once heard a reply to a charge of plagiarism, where the author's defense was "my memory disguised itself as my imagination." I do not want to claim imaginative insights, but rather to acknowledge that this book is a tribute to our collective memory — a memory that is ever-wise, ever-reflective and ever-active.

I would like to thank Malcolm Clarkson for initiating the *Change Forces* trilogy and Anna Clarkson of RoutledgeFalmer for her continuing support of the *Change Forces* trilogy.

As with all the books, my deep gratitude goes to Claudia Cuttress who produced the manuscript.

I ended *Change Forces: The Sequel* with the following reference to unfinished business:

Those engaged in education reform are those engaged in societal development; those engaged in societal development are those engaged in the evolution of virtue. It is time to return to large-scale reform with even more ambitious goals ... armed with the knowledge that we can turn complexity's own hidden power to our advantage.  
(p. 84)

Sustainable system change is the agenda, and we are at the very early stages of an exciting journey.

