

THE NEW MEANING OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Full reference of paper	Fullan, M. (2007) <i>The New Meaning of Educational Change</i> . Fourth Edition. New York: Teachers College Press.
Aims purpose of paper	When Michael Fullan published the first edition of this seminal work in 1982, he revolutionised the theory and practice of education change. He has written many other books, but for many this still is the definitive compendium to all aspects of the managing educational change.
Method and sample (if applicable).	Draws on a multiplicity of research studies and reform efforts in North America and elsewhere, including the UK.
Key findings/ideas presented	<p>Selected findings include:</p> <p>Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it’s as simple and as complex as that. We almost never stop to think what change means for others around us. The crux of change is how individuals come to grips with this reality. All real change involves loss, anxiety and struggle. New experiences are always initially reacted to in the context of some familiar, reliable construction of reality in which people must be able to attach personal meaning to experiences, regardless of how meaningful they might be to others.</p> <p>All real change involves going through zones of uncertainty, like being at sea, or being lost, and confronting more information than you can handle. So, real change, whether desired or not, represents a serious personal or collective experience characterised by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment and personal growth.</p> <p>The implementation of educational change involves change in practice, but change isn’t a single entity even if we are talking about one innovation in the classroom [eg introducing technology]. Innovation is multidimensional. There are at least three dimensions at stake: the possible use of new or revised materials/resources; the possible use of new teaching approaches; the possible alteration of beliefs. All three aspects of change are necessary to achieve a particular educational goal or set of goals. Since interaction with others influences what one does, relationships with other teachers is critical. Change involves learning to do something new, and interaction is the primary basis for social learning. New meanings, new behaviours, new skills and new beliefs depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals. Teacher isolation and its opposite – collegiality – provide the best starting point for considering what works for the teacher. In one major study, the degree of change was strongly related to the extent to which teachers interacted with each other and others providing help. Collegiality is measured by the frequency of communication, mutual support, help etc and this is a strong indicator of whether change will be implemented. There is no getting around the primacy of personal contact. As well as learning new skills and having one-to-one and group opportunities to give and receive help, they need to talk about the meaning of change. The more complex the change, the more interaction is required during implementation.</p> <p>When trying to initiate change, you need to think about relevance – need for the new practice, clarity of what it is and utility in what it has to offer; readiness – people’s practical and conceptual capacity to initiate and develop a new practice; and resources – the accumulation of and provision of support as part of the change process.</p>

	<p>Change is a process, not an event. It takes time. People often go through the 'implementation dip'; in other words, after the initial excitement or activity, things often start to get worse before they get better.</p>
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