

PREFACE



This book comes at the end of a decade of great growth and apparent prosperity. Middle-class America, like the middle classes in many other developed economies, became a culture of shopping, spending, and speculation. Even moderate middle-class earners turned into property owners and speculators, boosting consumer spending and incurring increasing debt with the confidence that ever-rising property values would cover their credit. Meanwhile, those on the lower rungs of the middle and working classes saw their real incomes fall and borrowed more and more money on increasingly risky terms to make ends meet and avoid getting left behind.

But the boom is over. Housing prices are in free fall and the credit crunch is on. Big-time investors played and lost with ordinary people's money, our governments stepped in to bail them out, and we will be paying the price and repaying the debt for years to come. So who needs another book on educational change at this crucial moment in our shared economic destiny? Isn't it time to just hold things right where they are, to put education and schools on the back burner, and attend to bigger priorities instead?

There are those who have said that the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression should cause us to freeze all public spending at current levels and that boosting public education is a luxury we can no longer afford. They have argued that now is the time to cut back, just as we did in the 1980s. Yet, in *When Markets Collide*, economic and investment guru Mohammed El-Erian reminds us that it is exactly when we are in a slump and falling behind international competitors, such as the emerging economies, of China, India, and parts of the Middle East, that we most need to invest in the training and skills that will shape our future.¹

Then there are those who produce fear-mongering books and videos that depict how much harder and longer the children and young adults of Asian economies work in order to get ahead. We learn about young people who take extra calculus for pleasure, go to cramming schools on the weekends, and study musical instruments with relentless rigor. Like many American reformers in the 1990s argued after visits to Japan, these commentators propose harder work, longer hours, and increased diligence as the savior of our overindulged adolescents.² Of course, more emphasis

on hard work compared to making easy money or wanting instant fame is certainly a good thing. But hard work alone is not enough. Indeed, the New Puritans of school reform who see increased effort as the answer overlook the problematic aspects of some of the countries with top test scores. Many of these competitors are rarely or barely democracies. Civic engagement is often sacrificed for personal advancement, humanitarianism is sometimes a casualty of increased entrepreneurialism, and social studies and the humanities can mean content memorization and drill rather than critical and independent thinking.

Then there are those who see in Chinese and Indian spaceships the same economic and educational threats that U.S. politicians saw in the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik in 1957. And their answers are equally askew—more science, mathematics, and technology; less art, music, physical education, history, and literature.³ These pundits ignore how the world's most educationally and economically successful democracies do not succeed by science and mathematics alone, or by just throwing more content at young people as if they were force-fed geese. Instead, these nations prosper through a broad and challenging curriculum that teaches people what to do with knowledge, how to apply it and move it around among others, and how to come up with new knowledge when change requires it. These prosperous democracies are successful knowledge societies.

Finally, there are those who believe that people in business have the answer to educational change and that they know best where to go next. They want more data and performance targets. They advise more competition among schools, along with performance-based pay for teachers—proposing that young and hungry teachers would gladly choose a more front-loaded salary they could invest in a stock-market pension of defined contributions rather than gradually accumulating rewards that lead to defined benefits.⁴ After the catastrophic collapse of the free market and the stock market, along with the loss of many people's defined-contribution pensions, these indiscriminating business admirers must now feel a bit embarrassed, at best.

At a time of global economic meltdown, increasing dependence on oil, and accelerating climate change, we need bold new solutions, not stale old slogans. Cutbacks do not equip us to be competitive in the future. The unregulated markets that got us into our current financial mess and pushed market-driven solutions into the public sector are not going to get us out of it. Educational standardization has dumbed down our curriculum and burdened our schools with bigger government and overbearing bureaucracy, and has not enabled us to adapt flexibly to the future. These Old Ways of educational change in the 20th century are ill suited to the fast, flexible, and vulnerable New World of the 21st century.

It is time, now more than ever, for a New Way of educational change that is suited to the dramatically new problems and challenges we are encountering. This New Way should build on the best of what we have learned from the Old Ways of the past without retreating to or reinventing the worst of them. It should look abroad for intelligent alternatives and be especially alert to those educational and economic successes that also express and advance democratic and humanitarian values. It should attend to the advancement of the economy and the restoration of prosperity but not at the price of other educational elements that contribute to the development of personal integrity, social democracy, and the advancement of human decency.

This book sets out such a way of educational and social change: the *Fourth Way*. Caught writing part of this book in a local coffee shop, a customer at a neighboring table, perhaps bored with his date (or maybe she was bored with him), leaned over and asked what we were writing. On being told this was a book called *The Fourth Way*, he retorted, “Wow, that’s really interesting.” Asked why, he replied, “Because it really makes me wonder what the other three are!”

We hope you will have the same response. We identify three prior Ways of change since World War II and then describe foundational principles of a new Fourth Way of change. Among the alternatives from which we can choose as we pass today’s critical turning point, it is the Fourth Way that will move us towards a more inclusive, inspiring, and sustainable future.

Our argument is a kind of journey. It begins with a first chapter that sets out the three Ways of change that have gone before:

- a First Way of state support and professional freedom, of innovation but also inconsistency;
- a Second Way of market competition and educational standardization in which professional autonomy is lost; and
- a Third Way that tries to navigate between and beyond the market and the state and balance professional autonomy with accountability.

Chapter 1 identifies the legacies each Way has left us and distinguishes what we should keep or retrieve, and what we should leave behind.

In Chapter 2, we argue that the great promise of the Third Way has not been fulfilled because three paths of distraction have diverted us from it: (1) autocratic imposition of targets and testing, (2) technocratic obsessions with data and spreadsheets, and (3) effervescent indulgence in securing quick lifts in test gains. These distractions make education short sighted and superficial, preventing deeper transformations in the quality

of teaching and learning that can produce higher-order thinking skills and develop deeper virtues and values.

Chapter 3 delineates four horizons of hope—images of promising practice that give clues about the most desirable way forward. These images comprise the world’s highest-performing nation on many international indicators of educational and economic success, the most turned-around school district in England, a professional network of 300 underachieving schools that improved results dramatically by promoting schools working with schools, and outstanding instances of community organizing and development that demonstrate how positive change does not always begin with government but must sometimes work aside from and even in opposition to it.

Building on these research-based examples, we set out the new direction of the Fourth Way in Chapter 4 by describing six pillars of purpose that support change, three principles of professionalism that drive it, and four catalysts of coherence that hold it together.

All the elements of the Fourth Way we point to are real. Every one of them already exists. We have seen them with our own eyes in the nations, networks, and systems we have evaluated and in the schools with which we work. We describe them fully in this book. These examples are not selective and rose-tinted celebrations of success based on second-hand sources or swift visits to districts to listen to senior leaders praise their own systems in ways that echo our own biases. We pinpoint the limitations as well as strengths of our examples and show how we can and should push beyond them. In this respect, the Fourth Way is based upon substantial first-hand assessments of high performing systems and promising practices from around the world.

A world dominated by wealth and might has diminished and almost destroyed us. But in the depths of crisis, a new spirit is emerging in which service and sacrifice in a commonwealth of hope can elevate us to a higher purpose and a humane exercise of our powers. The song lines from Leonard Cohen that we have selected to open this volume remind us that historical change is real, not illusory. Greed and a culture of narcissism can give way to public spirit. Secrecy and surveillance can give way to transparency and democracy. There is no finer place to pursue this quest than through the education of the young—the generations of our future. This is the moment that has summoned our effort to chart a better course in social and educational change—a Fourth Way of innovation, inspiration, and sustainability.