

## Book Review

*Changing Forces in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Education in Transition.* E. Polyzoi, M. Fullan, & J. Anchan (Eds.). London: RoutledgeFalmer Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.

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This volume is a collection of case studies that provide an in-depth analysis of the sudden and dramatic educational changes that followed the political, economic, and large-scale societal changes caused by the collapse of the Communist regimes in the early 1990s. Changes in education in five post-Soviet countries—Russia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, and East Germany—reveal that the removal of a rigid, highly centralized, and controlled infrastructure involved radical restructuring and was accompanied by enthusiasm as well as uncertainty and apprehension. By conceptualizing educational change as a dynamic process rather than an event in each of the five nations, the book makes a significant contribution to the scarce body of literature on post-totalitarian educational transition in Eastern and Central Europe.

This book is an illustration of a fruitful collaboration between scholars from Canada and the five nations who, in their attempt to understand transition in their countries, used Fullan's (2000) model as a conceptual framework for analysis of educational change. As J. Anchan points out in his foreword to the book, one of its strengths is that instead of claiming "expertise and theorize from without, seeking to explain the Other, it represents the expertise and researched analysis of intellectuals living their lives within the changes being explicated" (p. xvi). Although Fullan's work has been directed to the understanding of planned educational change at the micro-level of school and classroom, the authors believe that it could be applicable to a certain degree to change at the macro-level of comparative and international education, which in the case of Eastern Europe has a revolutionary rather than a planned and/or evolutionary character.

The book is organized in three parts. In Part I Michael Fullan discusses the Triple I model that encompasses three broad phases of change: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Fullan acknowledges that numerous factors are operating at each phase and emphasizes the nonlinear process of change in which "events at one phase can feed back to alter decisions made at previous stages, which then proceed to work their way through in a continuous interactive way" (p. 4). He supplements this model with three additional factors that must be taken into account with respect to large-scale reform: "the multiple innovations or coherence-making problem; the balance between

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and integration of pressure and support; and building new infrastructures" (p. 7) to support reform on a continual basis.

In Part II the application of the Triple I model is discussed in five case studies. In the first, Polyzoi and Dneprov examine the transformation of the education system in Russia since 1991. The authors point out that the data clearly support the value of Fullan's framework. However, there are "certain dynamics of the change process which it does not address" (p. 29). These include the integrative and organic process of change that has not typically proceeded in a linear fashion, the revolutionary nature of change in Russia, and the importance of the stage-setting that allowed the initiation of major national reform to proceed with such a speed and breath. The authors find Bizea's (1995) schema to be more consistent with the organic picture of the Russians' change process. The combination of the two models, which complement each other, provides a clearer understanding of the transition process in the former Communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe. One of the major findings of the analysis is that in Russia, because the funding required to support decentralization of the education system was not fully coordinated with budgetary capacity, a policy originally designed to promote educational equity through increased choice and regional differentiation helped to create the opposite. "In Russia, decentralization was initiated, but local capacities were not sufficiently developed to take advantage of the new government's proposal" (p. 23). Thus Dneprov's (1999a) analysis of education reform in Russia in an earlier publication based on Bizea's model is confirmed by the study. It reveals that not only is the Russian education system unable to break through the economic barriers that increasingly paralyze it, but also that the ideological breaking away from the values, attitudes, and mentalities of the Russian people is instrumental in the emergence of residual communism that serves to block or slow the pace of educational reform. However, the authors conclude, "Despite devastating economic hardship and waning political involvement (complicated by quasi-reformist and regressive political tendencies), an emergent progressive education movement in Russia is finally beginning to move forward, albeit with difficulty" (p. 31).

Polyzoi and Cerna's case study of education reform in the Czech Republic focuses on implementation using three sets of implementation factors as a framework for analysis: the specific nature of the reform, local characteristics, and external factors. Although the authors acknowledge the value of Fullan's framework for understanding the Czech Republic's implementation of change following the "Velvet evolution," they believe that the field of organizational theory (Venda, 1991, 1999) may offer answers to some of the questions about the tendency toward retrenchment after initial change, the attempts to return to pre-war models, or the degree of difficulty with which the transformation process is accomplished in various East European countries. Thus the authors suggest that a better understanding of the dynamics of societal transformation in post-Soviet countries in transition may be achieved by supplementing the Triple I model with the four principals formulated by Venda. These are: (a) systems in transition are typically characterized by the coexistence of old and new structures; (b) the emergent new "state" may have few common elements with the old, and the wider apart the two states are initially, the more difficult

the transition process; (c) if, as the old state begins to transform, its initial drop in efficiency is too steep, the system may enter a chaotic state and collapse; (d) the transformation process is not unidimensional but affected by multiple factors simultaneously (pp. 49-53). Therefore, this study provides not only an analysis of the implementation process of education reform in the Czech Republic, but also "proposes a framework for thinking about change so that key forces can be identified and used to our advantage, particularly as they pertain to nations that undergo dramatic and sudden transformation" (p. 53).

The application of the Triple I model to the case of education change in Hungary by Halasz allows for a more complete case analysis of reform across the three stages of initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Halasz begins by identifying the unique features of the Hungarian case. These are listed as follows: first, educational change relates to a major system change with implications for all elements of education in Hungary; second, the change under analysis is not yet complete; and third, this reform was initiated during a period of overall social-political transformation (p. 55). Further, the author states, "the tension between the goals of restoration and modernization has been a prominent feature of educational transformation in Hungary" (p. 56). The outcomes of the reform are both positive and negative. The positive outcomes include the "mobilization of creating energies in schools within the teaching profession" (p. 67), the increase in school openness to community involvement, and acceptance of cross-disciplinary approaches in schools, the expanded efforts to adapt school-level programs to students' special needs, and the dramatic increase in the need for inservice training for teachers and principals. One of the negative outcomes of education reform is that "the quality of school programme is no longer guaranteed," and that "differences among schools—which had already been in evidence—have further increased" (p. 68). Like the authors of the three previous case studies, Halasz supplements the Triple I Model with a number of insights about specific features of (Hungarian) education change in societies in transition (pp. 70-72):

1. Educational changes are strongly related to processes external to the education sector.
2. The change process is not linear.
3. The capacity to manage uncertainty is a critical factor.
4. Greater willingness to take risk is endemic to societies in transition.
5. Communication and ongoing learning become particularly important.
6. Efficiency in use of resources increases with experience.
7. A pragmatic approach focusing on the instruments of implementation prevails over abstract, theoretical conceptions of change.

In this adapted framework, Halasz suggests that change must be understood not only as a goal, but also as the outcome of an open-ended process. Thus the focus of analysis must be "shifted away from the original goals of change and towards the environment, which not only determines whether or not those goals will be achieved but also serves continuously to modify them" (p. 72).

In conceptualizing the Romanian case of nonlinear education reform, Birzea and Fartusnic state, "The complexity of the task of education reform had meant that the process of change has been neither completely controlled nor predict-

able; thus a definitive model of change remains elusive" (p. 75). Based on Birzea's (1994) analysis of transition concepts, the authors produce a model that combines Fullan's model with four distinct phases governing the reform process in the Romanian education system: "a) deconstruction (corrective reform), b) stabilization (reforms of modernization), c) transformation (structural reforms), and d) coordination (systematic reforms)" (p. 76). The authors point out that Romania's experiences in the 1990s were different from those of other post-Communist countries in that educational reform was ahead of economic reform, and that Romania garnered the largest amount of foreign support for educational reform among East European countries (p. 87). However, these differences have not resulted in faster or smoother educational change in Romania. Birzea and Farusnic's discussion of Romania's four stages of educational reform reveals that "Romania's education system at the present time exhibits three key features: lack of cohesion among programmes launched by various donors; dependence on external sources of financing; and rejection of innovation as a result of lack of readiness" (p. 89). The lack of clear policy for integrating foreign-assistance programs is further complicated by the fact that the three major donors (World Bank, the European Union, and the Open Society) promote very different educational philosophies that are difficult if not impossible to reconcile. Nevertheless, the input of international bodies was decisive for the initiation and implementation of major reforms. "However, in the institutionalization stages, international assistance has been decreasing while the role of all levels of government (national, regional, and local) is becoming increasingly critical" (p. 88). The authors urge further analysis of critical issues that must be addressed in the Romanian education system including the need to generate capacity-building at a grassroots level as opposed to top level in order to promote local involvement in the reform process, the need for improvements and reevaluation of teacher education and national institutions, the need to ensure equal access for the most disadvantaged groups in Romanian society (e.g., Romani minority), and the need for more community involvement and school-based approaches to education.

The last case study examines East German education as it was transformed following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1990 and the signing of the Unification Treaty between East and West Germany (FRG). As Arnhold states, the term *cloning*, which has been used to describe the process of restructuring of the East German higher education "is quite apt in describing what happened in other education subsystems as well" (p. 105). The author uses a combination of three conceptual frameworks for understanding transition. These include Birzea's (1994) model of transition, the University of Oxford model that was based on Birzea's analysis, and Fullan's three-stage model of change. The author concludes that although "the role of West German advisors at all levels of education system during the transition period cannot be overemphasized" (p. 105), during unification, "the FRG's education system with its many problematic features, was extended to the East" (p. 106). It would have been helpful if the author had identified what these problematic features are other than "the fast growing student population" (p. 104), but she limits her analysis to the statement, "A comprehensive reform of German higher education is still anticipated" (p. 106).

In Part III Fullan reflects on the insights provided by the authors in Part II. He also incorporates some ideas for modification and refinement of the Triple I model (e.g., Venda's four principals of transition) with the recent conceptual development in complexity theory (e.g., Wallance and Pocklington's four change management tasks) in a proposed new emergent conceptual framework for understanding the transformation of education in contexts of societal change. Although Venda's principals of transformation have been used by or at least referred to by most of the authors of the case studies included in this volume, not enough space is allotted for exploration or even examination of the four change management tasks suggested by Wallance and Pocklington, which include orchestration, flexible planning, culture building, and differential support. Taking into consideration the fast-growing body of literature on complexity science and its possible application to education theory and practice (Capra, 2002; Davis & Simmt, 2003; Waldrop, 1992), Fullan's reference to only one piece of work, Wallance and Pocklington (in press), leaves the impression that not all possibilities open to education theory by complexity science especially in regard to the main characteristics of complex systems that are self-organizing, self-maintaining, dynamic, and adaptive (Davis, Sumara, Luce-Kapler, 2000; Davis & Simmt, 2003) are considered in the proposed new framework. In addition, his point that a broad conceptual framework "may help guide our thinking and strategic planning" (p. 113) is somewhat inconsistent with complexity science, which suggests that change can only be occasioned (Davis & Simmt, 2003). As an educator who began her professional career in a former Communist country, which along with many other such countries is not represented in this collection, I am reminded by words like *strategic planning* of the times when education systems were seen as complicated, meaning predictable, not complex.

#### References

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