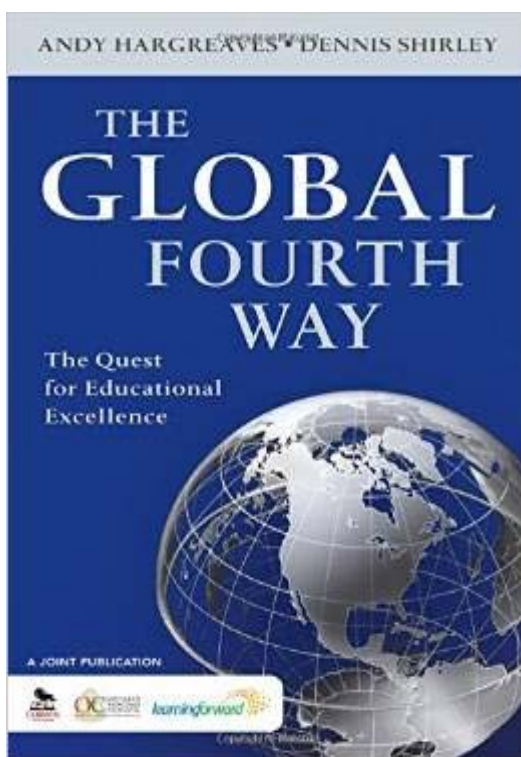


Book Review

The Quest for Educational Excellence

“The Global Fourth Way” by Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley

By Kathleen A. Tobin



In *The Global Fourth Way: The Quest for Educational Excellence*, authors Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley detail a new vision for education. Their proposal is not intended to overhaul existing systems completely; rather, it acknowledges strengths already in place and the contributions of teachers in creating and maintaining quality programs. Nor does their vision resemble contemporary reform movements so common today, which favor privatization and are

grounded in politics. Their expertise and substantive research support an application that may hold a good deal more promise.

The Global Fourth Way, note Hargreaves and Shirley, is a more advanced approach following experiments of the past. The First Way of educational change they describe emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when investment in public education was strong and faith in teachers to work autonomously was high. Many good ideas came from this era; however, there was no systematic method to exchange ideas or experiences beyond classroom walls. The Second Way followed in the 1980s, when resources and salaries were confronted by austerity policies and public school teachers met with unprecedented criticism. Prescriptive curricular designs paralleled top down management styles and performance-based pay reflected practices in the corporate world. The Third Way of change in the 1990s embraced more evidence-based methods, increasing data collection and emphasis on mathematics, for instance, at the expense of social studies and other subjects. While there were some benefits to learning gained in each of these decades, the problems have been serious enough to warrant attention.

The Fourth Way of leadership and change, Hargreaves and Shirley argue, offers positive new directions based on solid international research and a genuine understanding of education. It is based on these values:

Pillars of Purpose

1. An inspiring dream
2. Education as a common public good
3. A moral economy of education
4. Local authority
5. Innovation with improvement
6. Platforms for change

Principles of Professionalism

7. Professional capital
8. Strong professional associations
9. Collective responsibility
10. Teaching less to learn more
11. Mindful uses of technology

Catalysts of Coherence

12. Intelligent benchmarking
13. Prudent and professional approaches to testing
14. Incessant communication
15. Working with paradox

Individual chapters in *The Global Fourth Way* center on examples of high performance in Finland, Singapore, Alberta (Canada), Ontario (Canada), England, and California (US). Each captures the essence of educational models, practices, and issues in the region at large, before focusing on specific cases that support key values in their proposal. For example, in “Chapter Five – Alberta: Innovation with Improvement,” Hargreaves and Shirley cite Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) findings regarding Canada’s successes (supportive family culture, strong welfare state, high quality teachers) in contextualizing the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI). AISI’s mission has been to fund teachers, principals, students, and community members in innovation based on local needs. Innovation with improvement, local authority, and collective responsibility are core principles of the Fourth Way, and here the

authors give concrete examples of how those areas of their vision might be put into action.

The same is true in “Chapter Eight – California: Professional Organizing for Public Good.” Hargreaves and Shirley describe one of the world’s largest teachers’ unions, the California Teachers’ Association (CTA), and its victories in recent battles with politicians in their efforts to provide quality education for the poorest and most vulnerable children in low-performing districts. Accomplishments of the CTA and the demonstrated effectiveness of organizing highlight a number of standards of the Fourth Way, including professional and political capital, courageous leadership, innovation with improvement, intensive interaction, culture of inquiry, and the role of professionals as intellectuals. In a climate of widespread disrespect for teachers and teachers’ unions in the United States today, it is refreshing and inspiring to see the positive effects of organization and professional expectations on education noted.

The entire book is inspiring, but its true strength lies in the authors’ research, detailed outlines and accounts, and concluding chapter detailing specific “pointers for practice.” Some readers may criticize the authors’ attention to international cases appearing less relevant to the United States, but at this critical juncture in US education, it is even more essential to study and consider multiple perspectives. Hargreaves and Shirley are experts in the field of education and demonstrate authentic understanding and dedication to improvement. Avoiding the stridency present in current debates over education reform, they seek to inform all sincerely interested in enhanced learning through fearless leadership and enlightened collaboration.

“The Global Fourth Way: The Quest for Educational Excellence.” By Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012. ISBN: 978-1412987868

About the Authors

Andy Hargreaves is the Thomas More Brennan Chair at the Lynch School of Education, Boston College, and the elected Visiting Professor at the Institute of Education, London. He is the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Educational Change* and serves as leading editor of the first and second *International Handbook of Educational Change*. Hargreaves is the cofounder and former director of the International Centre for Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto.

Dennis Shirley is a professor at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. Shirley's educational work spans from the nitty-gritty micro-level of assisting beginning teachers in complex school environments to the macro-level of designing and guiding large-scale research and intervention projects for school districts, states, and networks. Shirley was the first US scholar to document the rise of community organizing as an educational change strategy, and his activities in this arena have led to multiple long-term collaborations and a steady stream of speaking engagements and visiting professorships in the United States, Canada, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan.

About the Reviewer

Kathleen A. Tobin is associate professor of history at Purdue University Calumet in Hammond, Indiana. She has also served as faculty representative on the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and as chair of Indiana's Statewide Transfer and Articulation Committee. She teaches U.S. Global History and her research includes the history of birth control and population policy. Her recent publications include “Population Density and Housing in Port-au-Prince: Historical Construction of Vulnerability” in the *Journal of Urban History* and she is completing “Engineering Dreams: U.S. Chinese Student Population Growth in Historical Disciplinary Context” for *Chinese America: History and Perspectives*.