BOOK REVIEW

Title: Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy
Author: Michael Fullan
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An increasing number of books on educational leadership theory are published as schools, boards, and the Ministry of Education recognize the immense impact of school leadership on student success. According to OISE scholar Ken Leithwood, school leadership is second only to direct class instruction in influence over student achievement. The Ministry of Education and school boards across the province have invested significantly in leadership, mentorship, and coaching initiatives aimed at supporting school leaders. As an elementary school principal, I attend many of these conferences and symposiums with school leaders from across the province and at each session Michael Fullan's research and writing on leadership is inevitably referenced. His latest contribution to the literature is called *Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy* which will only add to his references by school leaders across the province.

For Fullan, the idea of "motion" leadership involves helping leaders to move individuals, institutions, and whole systems forward in a positive way and managing and embracing the intricate challenges inherent within the change process. "The skinny" refers to the core essence of his message as that of presenting the "unadorned facts" through a simplistic and straightforward approach to leadership. This philosophy of less is more is not only reflected in the content but also by the book itself. Coming in at just under 80 very readable pages, Fullan models simplicity by presenting his ideas in as succinct and efficient a manner as possible. If "the skinny" involves stripping away the clutter involved in change, Motion Leadership provides its essence in a logical, coherent 80 pages.

Fullan takes a decidedly practical approach to the eight elements of "Motion Leadership"; change problems, change itself, connecting peers with purpose, capacity building trumps judgmentalism, learning is the work, transparency, love, trust, and resistance, and leadership for all; with an eye toward increasing knowledge rather than providing tips and strategies for practicing and aspiring leaders. Fullan employs the "ready, fire, aim" approach to the development of this theory as one born and refined in practice by scholars and educational leaders. While the ideas for leading change have implications for all forms of leadership, the focus is clearly on large scale change leadership and moving systems such as school boards and government policies, more than individual leaders in schools and departments. The result is a

book which may appeal to practicing school leaders such as principals and vice-principals, but

Fullan's approach targets systemic change more specifically as influenced by superintendents, directors, members of government, and educational leadership scholars.

Fullan uses examples from school systems in Great Britain, Australia, and Ontario to illustrate successes and challenges inherent within "motion leadership". He also refers to celebrity Chef Jamie Oliver's attempts to exert influence over the food served in cafeterias in British schools as illustrations of the realities of attempting to lead systemic change. While his attempts were met with resistance and frustration, Jamie Oliver learned and refined his "motion leadership" in practice as he struggled with getting first one head "dinner lady" then many more to buy into his ideas. Fullan uses Jamie Oliver's story to highlight some of the main factors necessary to influence change.

A motion leader understands that relationships matter so much that little can be accomplished without establishing positive relationships and trust. A leader must be a lead learner, willing to engage in the change process together and learn from experiences along the way. By establishing relationships and embracing the learning process, a motion leader begins to build capacity in others and maintains transparency throughout. While implementation dips are inevitable, consistent communication throughout the process will support and encourage risk taking and resilience. Fullan takes a realistic approach to the change process by recognizing the inevitability of resistance to new ideas. His approach resembles an invitational approach to school leadership by trusting in the integrity and competency of others as Fullan claims trust strengthens moral commitment and shared purpose in the face of resistance. While some will embrace change and commit to new ideas, others will prefer the safety of the status quo and will oppose change. This is where Fullan's approach most aligns with an invitational approach by optimistically encouraging hope for the future by trusting the integrity and competency of others.

"Motion Leadership" will appeal to systemic leaders interested in reflecting upon and refining their ability to lead the change that is expected when they are appointed. Though the approach to the book is streamlined in congruence with the message, Fullan could spend more time discussing the importance of the notion of care to change leadership. In order to lead effectively, build relationships, trust others' competency and integrity, a leader would benefit tremendously from leading from a caring core. A genuine belief in the moral imperative for student success that will result from leading change would contribute significantly to the leaders' ability to effectively lead change initiatives. Without this focus, change leadership can be mistaken for implementation. Fullan states, "These days, all newly appointed leaders, by definition, have a mandate to bring about change" p. 8. Educational leaders who are intentional about a caring approach that is trusting and optimistic must consider change that is rooted in this approach rather than change for change's sake. As Fullan references the importance of relationship building, that process should include discernment for celebrating that which is working well and that which requires change. Without this approach, Fullan's book can read like a theoretical "how to" approach towards implementation of policy. As educational leaders, we have committed to more than that. The example of Jamie Oliver's attempt to influence change within the British school system from a food perspective resonates because of his caring

approach to influence change for the sake of the health and education of school children and this example best exemplifies Fullan's leadership.

Fullan's "Motion Leadership" models an approach to leading for change that strips away the excess to get to the essentials by providing a book that is far from bloated, and by offering a succinct approach to leadership that respects the contributions of those within the organization, while focusing on goals for change. Despite the focus on large scale systemic change, the core elements should resonate with school-based leaders as they consider moving toward common goals that support student learning.