

**Partners in Learning**  
**Learning to Lead Change: Building System Capacity**  
**Leadership for Change Library**

**Turnaround Leadership**

**Michael Fullan**

**San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006**

**102 pages**

*Turnaround Leadership* critiques turnaround intervention policies as superficial and inadequate. Chapter 1 makes the case that the real reform agenda is the income gap between low and high earners in society and the associated education gap. With compelling data it shows (comparing the developed countries) that the countries with greater gaps experience a syndrome of negative consequences — lower life expectancies, greater individual and societal costs, problematic economic prosperity, and lower social cohesion.

The second chapter shows how turnaround policies, aimed at low performing schools, at best move schools from “awful” to “adequate,” ignoring conditions necessary for further improvement. These policies fail to get at the source of the problems of failure.

The book then lays out ten conditions, based on change knowledge, that would result in deeper change:

1. Define closing the gap as the overarching goal
2. Attend initially to the three basics (literacy, numeracy, and well-being of students)
3. Be driven by tapping in to people’s dignity and self-respect
4. Ensure that the best people are working on the problem
5. Recognize that all successful strategies are socially based
6. Assume that lack of capacity is the initial problem and then work on it continuously
7. Stay the course through continuity of good direction by leveraging leadership
8. Build internal accountability linked to external accountability
9. Establish conditions for the evolution of positive pressure
10. Use the previous nine strategies to build public confidence

These ten conditions focus on capacity building and on motivating large numbers of people to invest in improvement. Continuous improvement is akin to a “winning streak” in sports or organizations. By using this change knowledge we can more fundamentally establish the conditions and strategies for deep reform.

The final chapter presents concrete cases from Fullan’s work that reveals the specific strategies in action that are getting results. This is a book that fuses theory and practice in the quest for tri-level reform across school and community, district and state levels. It shows that success is possible and holds out the promise that it can be achieved on a scale never before reached.



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