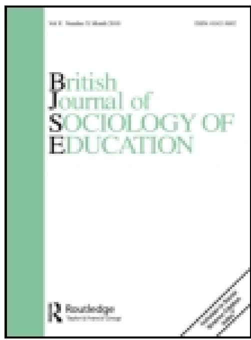

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The fourth way: the inspiring future for educational change

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REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

The fourth way: the inspiring future for educational change, by Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin, joint publication with Ontario Principals' Council and National Staff Development Council, 2009, £16.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4129-7637-4

Reviewed by Rob Cuthbert, David Jary, Yann Lebeau and Lisa Lucas

The Fourth Way begins with a quotation from Leonard Cohen's song 'Democracy':

> Sail on, sail on, O mighty ship of state!
> To the shores of need, past the reefs of greed
> Through the squalls of hate. Sail on, sail on, sail on

Written at the height of the credit crunch, but also at a high point of optimism, this book is a yes-we-can manifesto for educational change. Recapitulating and building on the research and learning of the authors and many others, it seeks to seize the moment when all seemed possible just after Obama's election, taking to heart his (then) chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel's adopted dictum: 'never let a good crisis go to waste'. Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley, educational change gurus with fully-paid-up liberal democratic credentials, are aiming for impact, relevance, and engagement with a broad audience. Reading this book now may, as they intend, renew our inspiration but also tests it, by prompting three questions. As the Tea Party continues and the bankers' bonuses return, has the ship of state already washed up on the reefs of greed in the squalls of hate, or can we still allow the audacity of hope? Can we really identify a Fourth Way, and was there ever even a Third Way? And maybe a fourth question: who are the intended audience? As a student and practitioner of higher educational management and policy I may be at the margins of that audience, but the book's argument can nevertheless be applied with advantage to the current travails of English higher education policy.

After the global financial crisis 'the status quo is no longer an option'. Hargreaves and Shirley start from here, setting out their credo assertively. It is 'askew' to argue for:

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> more science, mathematics, and technology; less art, music, physical education, history and literature. . . . the world's most educationally and economically successful democracies . . . 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. (x)

We could hardly do better for a nutshell critique of the Browne Report's (2010) description of arts, humanities and social sciences as 'non-priority' subjects. From this starting point the book takes off with messianic zeal, reaching some inspirational heights but occasionally plumbing some depths with clunky rhetorical devices.

Business models and data-driven performance management are not the answer, and they never were. The first chapter, 'The Three Ways of Change', revisits Giddens' analysis 'to show how and why the Third Way has stalled' (2), at least as far as the United States and the United Kingdom are concerned. The First Way, defined by the welfare state, promoted innovation without cohesion, as professional discretion over-rode government support and indeed the importance of local contexts in shaping educational change. Passive trust between government/parents and teachers gave way to active mistrust in the Second Way. The Reagan/Thatcher 'transitional period marked a quest for coherence' (6) and greater consistency of standards and achievement, but 'the answer to outcomes and standards lies not in how they are written or imposed, but in how communities of teachers make sense of them together in relation to the particular students they teach' (7). The authors try to go beyond Thatcherism without dismissing it completely, by rebranding it in two phases: 'after the energy and initiative of the interregnum, markets and diversity were quickly trumped by standardization and uniformity' (9) and professional autonomy was lost.

We can perhaps recognise a similar distinction between the earliest stage of Thatcherite higher education reform, releasing the energy of the polytechnics as new higher education corporations (Pratt 1997; Cuthbert 2007), and the later stages, whose consequences have been forensically unpicked by Deem (1998) and Deem, Hillyard, and Reed (2007), and bemoaned by others such as Jary and Parker (1994). Unconvincingly, from the standpoint of UK higher education, Hargreaves and Shirley argue that New Public Management has 'lateral energy' in which government performance targets stimulate development, support and the creation of new materials in lateral networks at operational levels. But the argument relies on UK experience rather than US experience: while the United States barely got beyond the Second Way, the United Kingdom was different in achieving a 'Third Way that tries to navigate between and beyond the market and the state and balance professional autonomy with accountability' (xi), involving a new 'bounty of funded activity'. Ontario is held up as a role model for Third Way systems, but even here

it seems there was a Mertonian displacement of means into ends: 'in practice, *the educational reform strategies of the Third Way have distracted its founders and followers from their ability to achieve the Way's original ideals*' (19; original emphasis). In the marketised academic capitalism of US higher education (Roosevelt 2006; Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004) this is hard to credit. Even in UK higher education, with its undeniable 'bounty' of expansion without reduction of unit costs, such an interpretation now seems unduly charitable. Myopic and self-defeating performance management and measurement seem to have dominated the policy discourse for too long, and the Browne Report argues the merits of complete marketisation in a deeply flawed (Collini 2010; Cuthbert 2010a, 2010b; HEPI 2010a, 2010b) Second Way-ish manner, which the government nevertheless seems to have swallowed whole (BIS 2010).

The rose-tinted backward look leads us to Chapter Two, 'The Three Paths of Distraction': autocracy, technocracy and effervescence. The authors move easily and convincingly between policy initiatives and research evidence from many countries to develop a devastating critique of 'Third Way' failures. A report from the New Commission on Skills of the American Workforce, and McKinsey's 'How the World's Best-Performing Schools Come Out on Top', are held up as models of autocratic distraction. They may diagnose problems well but adopt 'inoculation' strategies (to dismiss opposing views by allowing a tiny dose of them) and skew the interpretation of evidence to choose solutions to match initial prejudices. Michael Barber, faintly praised for his starting point with New Labour, is lambasted for the 'deliverology' of McKinsey and the Blair Government. Autocrats regarding 'letting go' of control as failure, but without letting go there is no scope for the double loop learning that is vital for progress in every sphere, not least higher education (Cuthbert 2007).

Equally distracting, technocracy subverts by converting moral issues into technical questions to be resolved by more and more testing and analysis. The problem is not with data, but with their misuse and misinterpretation, and over-reliance on data rather than moral judgement. The argument is illuminated by telling examples, all the way from London primary schools through No Child Left Behind to ProZone in American and English football. It might equally have appealed to the excesses of quality assurance (Reid 2009) and research assessment (Deem et al. 2007) in UK higher education. The Third Way supposedly promoted self-surveillance, but gave rise to the third distraction, the effervescence of success against performance measures, with those who were distracted misinterpreting this for real achievement, rather as vice-chancellors and university governors over-indulge in the ersatz achievement of high position in university league tables (Locke et al. 2008). The Third Way therefore became stalled: 'the elephant in the room of the Third Way has been an excess of government control … It's time for a change that is disruptive, not incremental' (45).

With Chapter Three, 'The Four Horizons of Hope', and its opening biblical quotation we almost fall into a fourth way of distraction by clunky evangelistic language, but each horizon turns out to be a persuasive case study. Finland is 'the top-performing nation' in education but 'has no system of standardized testing except for confidential sampling for monitoring purposes' and it seems too good to be true that 'There is no indigenous Finnish term for *accountability.* Instead, public education is seen as a collective social and professional *responsibility*' (54; original emphasis). The argument offers a socio-technical systems perspective on change, making it barely distinguishable in form from the next 'horizon', the UK's Raising Achievement, Transforming Learning initiative, where Hargreaves and Shirley deploy the wisdom of (their own and others') research and scholarship to great effect: '... successful networks like *RATL* [Raising Achievement, Transforming Learning] ... eventually challenge the logic of the system itself. They demonstrate the power of development over delivery, of professional responsibility over administrative accountability, and of energetic involvement over bureaucratic alignment' (58). Shirley's expertise comes to the fore in case studies of community alignment that reveal the third horizon – the democratic movement, including of course 'America's most famous community organizer', Barack Obama. The fourth horizon, 'the turned-around district', takes London Docklands and Tower Hamlets as its exemplar, but sounds like community organising again, albeit more education-centric. In UK higher education it is not quite so easy to see equivalent horizons, since the view is dominated by the 'mission group' skyscrapers of vested interest. There are many proponents of alternative approaches, for example in the scholarship of teaching and learning, but few worked examples. But on a broader canvas the horizons of hope, even if there are only two and not four, lead Hargreaves and Shirley to formulate the principles underlying a new approach.

The 'Fourth Way' is naturally Chapter Four and it turns out to depend on six pillars of purpose, three principles of professionalism and four catalysts of coherence. So no alleviation of allusive alliteration – and the authors, distracted by their own effervescence, lapse at times into uplifting but empty rhetoric. The Fourth Way is a theory of action that:

> brings together government policy, professional involvement, and public engagement around an inspiring social and educational vision of prosperity, opportunity, and creativity in a world of greater inclusiveness, security and humanity ... to forge an equal and interactive partnership among the people, the profession, and their government. (71)

No doubt motherhood and apple pie are there in spirit, and David Cameron's 'Big Society' may be just around the corner. But the banalities that afflict some intended heights of rhetoric do less than justice to the underly-

ing power of the analysis. From telling case studies and well-exploited research, the authors produce analyses, lists and tables that illuminate the shortcomings of past reform initiatives and are invaluable checklists for future reforms and their evaluators. Even reading across from the fields of organisation and management theory and policy studies, these checklists helpfully encapsulate much of what I believe about effective leadership, management and policy-making. However, a final summary tabulation of 17 differences between the Third and Fourth Ways (110) simply suggests there are many more than two ways to go.

The occasional clunkiness does not obscure the practical wisdom and authority in the analysis, which justify blue-chip endorsements on the book jacket from luminaries like Anthony Giddens and Michael Fullan. Only the central proposition that there is a 'Fourth Way' fails to convince. Perhaps Hargreaves and Shirley's own 'effervescence' has distracted them into believing it, or more likely they have accurately perceived that impact in the political sphere needs such (over-)simplification. Academe is properly more critical and less certain, and may prefer to conclude that there are many ways: they may perhaps share common principles, catalysts and more, but equally they may ultimately defy simple codification. This is a deeply scholarly book that makes political rather than academic proposals.

The premature optimism of the coffee-shop moments when the book was imagined is revealed in its pre-Tea Party sentiments – 'America is starting to come back together after years of falling apart' (76) – and its magnificent overestimation of the possibilities – 'It is precisely at dramatic turning points like the present that the acquisitive push for money and the property give way to this greater search for meaning' (76) – which the investment bankers seem not to have noticed. But as authoritarian governments in Tunisia and Egypt collapse under popular demonstrations from unlikely starting points, who can judge the possibilities for the future of educational change in mature or even sclerotic western democracies? With these examples before us we should not underestimate the possibilities for an inspiring future, if we could change the direction of the ship of state. So we should end as the book begins, with Leonard Cohen:

> Oh the sisters of mercy they are not departed or gone
> They were waiting for me when I thought that I just can't go on
> And they brought me their comfort and later they brought me this song
> Oh I hope you run into them, you who've been travelling so long

With their applied scholarship Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley point the ways, but probably not The Way, to bring us comfort, even in the bleak midwinter of English higher education fees policy.

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Rather than the full panoply of social policies and politics dealt with by Anthony Giddens, the original formulator of the 'Third Way', Hargreaves and Shirley's volume on the 'Fourth Way' is primarily about education, and mainly about education in schools, with little to say even about higher education. The two authors are well-connected educational researchers. Their previous research has involved a focus on school leadership and their association with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, a lead organisation in the implementation of the Labour government's specialist schools programme (for example, Hargreaves et al. 2007).

The core of their argument is that schools and the schools system must quit the culture of high-stakes testing, enter a new era of teacher professionalism, innovation and creativity, engage parents and communities in educational change, and deliver a great school to every student, leaving no school or community behind. Their claim is that this would be an evidence informed move, supported by analysis of high-performing systems across the world, including the example of 'educational tigers' such as Finland, Singapore or South Korea and by outliers in the United Kingdom and the USA. There is, however, much in the authors' argument that goes well beyond what can be described as evidence-based. A great deal of extrapolation is required to move from their assessment of the merits of educational provision in Finland and South East Asia or Ontario and Tower Hamlets with little reflection on the 'exceptionalism' and possible non-replicability of these cases.

As readers, we should be forewarned when the authors remark that this is not just another research-based volume. Subtitling their volume *The Inspiring Future for Educational Change*, the authors further signal that this is no ordinary text when they identify 'horizons of hope', and conclude the volume by citing lines from the poet Robert Frost about making 'all the difference'. At one point Giddens referred to his own writing on the Third Way as 'Utopian Realist'. This might also appear to capture the orientation of Hargreaves and Shirley, except that at times what they suggest might seem more Utopian than realist.

The volume is a short, punchy book that clearly intends to be seen and heard as a critical echo of the clarion calls that accompanied the advent of the political 'Third Way' in western politics. Stylistically, the volume has some of the features of Anthony Giddens' polemical, also short, books (above all, Giddens 1998) that brought him prominence as Clinton and Blair's 'guru' and the leading academic voice of the politics of New Labour (also see Giddens 2001). Much as did Giddens' publications, the Hargreaves and Shirley volume piles on examples of what is 'bad' about the old ways

and what is ‘good’ or ‘hopeful’ about the proposed new ways. It heralds the Fourth Way as immanent in the Third. On the back cover of *The Fourth Way* Giddens himself endorses it as a ‘unique and excellent text’, saying that:

> It is high time for a new Fourth Way of social and educational reform. … Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley set out this way for the very first time, and also provide crystal clear examples of what it looks like in practice.

There is however, I find, a central difficulty with the volume. Whereas the Third Way is defined as an in-between alternative to the polarity of social democratic welfarism, on the one hand, and neo-liberalism on the other, the Fourth Way lacks such immediate, formal, location. It is not easy to pin down exactly what gives coherence to the Fourth Way and how to characterise it overall.

Compared with the many plaudits that have appeared in advance of the publication of Hargreaves and Shirley’s *The Fourth Way,* my own response is more subdued. I come to the volume with considerable previous acquaintance with Giddens’ writings (Bryant and Jary 2001), and my earlier thoughts on education and the Third Way can be found in Jary (2005). As a previous fairly ‘full-on’ supporter of Giddens and the Third Way, I now see that I expected too much. Once caught, twice shy, as it were, I am now far less inclined to go out on a limb in welcoming a Fourth Way as the offspring of the Third, especially with its formal basis far from clear.

This said, I do not regard the Third Way as quite the ‘dead duck’ that, with the defeat of New Labour, many of its critics now assume. I agree with much of Hargreaves and Shirley’s picture of the achievements as well as the shortcomings of Third Way education policies. However, whereas Hargreaves and Shirley are now as much full-on advocates of a Fourth Way as was Giddens for the Third, I can only be sceptical about their account of the new Promised Land.

As Hargreaves and Shirley see it:

> The original Third Way held out great promise. … It restored respect for educators and increased public investment in their work. Even the most disillusioned critics of how the Third Way has turned out would never want to go back to the mean-spirited politics of the Second Way or the inconsistency of the First. (43)

They identify (in Chapter One) the First, Second and Third Ways of change as: ‘Innovation and inconsistency’ (1945–1975) and an ‘Interregnum’, ‘Complexity and contradiction’ (1975–late 1980s); ‘The way of the markets and standardisation’ (to 1995, neoliberalism); and ‘Performance and partner-

ship' (1995–present, a modified New Public Management). All three ways are seen as having elements worth keeping: the inspiration, innovation and autonomy from the First Way; the urgency, consistency and all-inclusive equity, goals of the Second Way; and the inclusiveness, public involvement, financial investment, better evidence and professional networks that were objectives of the Third Way. The Third Way is seen as a definite improvement on the first two. But 'three paths of distraction and diversion' from the Third Way's 'principles of professional and public engagement' – autocracy, technocracy and effervescence (presented in Chapter Two) – conspire to undermine its effectiveness and lead to the need for its replacement by the Fourth Way. The three sources of distraction present in the United Kingdom (but absent in the best performing educational nations such as Finland, South Korea and Singapore) involve: a 'slickly spun system of top-down delivery', a system of imposed testing and accountability (including 'naming and shaming') and to top-down market solutions; an 'explosion of data creating and data collecting of many kinds, turning a useful adjunct to professional practice into a system dominated and distorted by an over-reliance on data, with individuals required to embrace a culture of continuous 'self-surveillance'; and the transformation of a positive of heightened 'collegiality' and professional interactivity into a guided and 'harried' professionalism. Together these three 'distortions' explain why the Third Way failed to 'put the passion back into teaching' or 'the pleasure into learning' (45).

These are, of course, familiar enough accusations directed against the Third Way in education. It is in Chapters Three and Four that they raise the tempo with their introduction of the 'Four Horizons of Hope' (Chapter Three) and their extolling of the virtues and promise of the Fourth Way (Chapter Four), which they suggest can renew teacher professionalism and community engagement, and provide 'sustainable leadership' and accountability.

In outline, the 'Four Horizons of Hope' consist of: the example of 'top performing' nation(s) in education such as Finland, with its relatively decentralised education system and egalitarian welfarism and its highly successful fostering of a knowledge economy; effective innovative networks, for example in Alberta and Ontario; democratic movement; and 'turned round' districts such as London's Tower Hamlets, where 'distributed leadership', cross-school collaboration and community involvement and development has succeeded in raising performance.

'Six pillars of purpose and partnership' then characterise the Fourth Way: 'An inspiring and inclusive vision'; 'Strong public engagement'; 'Achievement through investment' (as in the UK 'Schools for Improvement Programme'); 'Corporate educational responsibility' (as exemplified by partnerships between the financial institutions of Canary Wharf and schools in Tower Hamlets); 'Students as partners in change'; and 'Mindful learning and teaching', which includes 'personalised' teaching, another of several pet preferences of the authors. These pillars are designed to enhance people's

'purposes, power, and relationships' (73). 'Three principles of professionalism' – 'High-quality teachers', 'Positive and powerful professional associations', and 'Lively learning communities' – are also emphasised. And all of this is topped-off with 'Four catalysts of coherence': 'Sustainable leadership', 'Integrating networks'; 'Responsibility before accountability', and 'Differentiation and diversity' – the last of these requires a greater responsiveness to local needs. In general, 'democracy and professionalism' replace 'bureaucracy and markets' (72). According to the author of *Turnaround Leadership*, Michael Fullan, in another back cover endorsement: 'the *The Fourth Way* is itself a powerful 'catalyst for coherence' in a field that badly needs guidance'.

But just how coherent is Hargreaves and Shirley's account of a Fourth Way? How clear-cut and laudable are its general objectives? How far does the book provide, as has been suggested, a practicable sense of direction?

As already evident, the authors' presentation involves an abundance of lists. There are also a goodly number of summary figures and tables, some of which are somewhat quirky and descend to 'management speak'. On the plus side, the authors refer perceptively to the destructiveness of a defeatist 'nostalgia' found widely in educational circles. And the volume contains many individually sensible proposals on schools, not least ideas on localism and innovative networks. But the empirical and theoretical base is piecemeal compared with what the grandiose claims of the authors might seem to require.

Hargreaves and Shirley emphasise how their thinking is grounded theoretically in the work of 'one of America's greatest educators', John Dewey. The Third Way is seen as a striking example of the replacement of dualistic '*either/or*' thinking by '*both/and*' thinking, favoured by Dewey, which the Fourth Way extends. My first problem, the formal one already stated, is the obscurity that remains – despite the Deweyesque 'both/and' thinking that in principle I applaud. Where *in terms of general principles* does a Fourth Way sit between the First and the Second Ways and beyond the Third? It seems more like a tinkering with the Third Way, a game, which, in the United Kingdom, both a post-Blair/Brown Labour Party and the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition, as well as Anthony Giddens, can play.

Giddens' own recent proposals on education do not greatly resolve the issues. His endorsement of the previous Labour Party adviser Robert Hill (2007) suggested 'five big reforms': extended pupil choice; diversify the curriculum; develop school leadership at all levels, along with school partnership; involve parents as co-educators, especially in poorer areas; and reform school funding. For Giddens, such reforms remain 'social democratic', but equally they might be seen as something of a hotchpotch, part extension, part correction of Third Way ideas. Underlining the ambiguity of Hargreaves and Shirley's proposals, their emphasis on responsible professionalism, community and corporate involvement, financial reinvestment, and a rhetoric of all-inclusive equity might seem, in fact, far more to resonate with the educational

policies of the Coalition as expressed in the 2010 schools White Paper than to amount to a distinctive Fourth Way programme. In these and in other respects it is difficult to regard the United Kingdom as anywhere close to the immanence of a distinctive Fourth phase emerging from the chrysalis of the Third. On schools, the UK Coalition government is intent on discontinuing or hollowing out effective Third Way policies such as Educational Maintenance Allowances, the Schools for Improvement Programme, Sure Start, and also the funding for the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust – the researchers' own territory. Hargreaves and Shirley place great emphasis on the extent to which educational under-performance in the USA and the United Kingdom is related to poor performance on the GINI index of inequality. There seems little chance that this will improve in the current climate.

Although the authors do not discuss higher education specifically, having myself previously critically reviewed Third Way higher education policy (Jary 2005), a brief sketch of how a Fourth Way might apply to higher education will also be instructive. Fourth Way objectives might include enhanced teacher professionalism and greater equity of access and in patterns of provision. Under New Labour, teacher professionalism in higher education took a number of hits in what can nonetheless be seen as legitimate attempts to enhance teaching standards, via institutions including the Quality Assurance Agency and the Higher Education Academy (Jary 2002). However, under the Coalition banner, little movement in a Fourth Way direction can be expected. Higher Academy Subject Centres have been a notable early casualty of the Coalition's policies. Widening participation bodies have been a further target, although the rhetoric of widening participation remains. Following the Browne Report, the proposed removal of core funding for arts and social science subjects, and a marketisation of provision via the increase in tuition fees, threaten to further increase the 'reputational range' of institutions whilst narrowing opportunity (see Brennan et al. 2010), although all done under the rubric of diversity and student choice. As for schools, in higher education positive aspects of the Third Way are being jettisoned without any great likelihood of progress in a Fourth Way direction.

The authors' claim is that in the USA education actually largely bypassed the Third Way and can go straight to the Fourth. They remark that the democratic forces revealed by the Obama election campaign fuelled their optimism about the prospects for a Fourth Way. Yet they acknowledge that their proposal are 'profoundly challenging'. What I see as the volume's Utopianism is evident most of all in its sweeping assumption that 'The age of unregulated markets and wanton greed is disappearing' (111). Surely this is wishful thinking? The wider politico-economic problems that the Third Way sought to combat, not least the lack of global financial controls, remain unresolved, even after a widespread banking collapse gave opportunity for reform. Without such structural change at the global level, the effects of atti-

tudinal and cultural change at the lower level are likely to be limited. Global processes are leading to new social instabilities and displacements as much as new social order. Market amorality remains a persistent aspect of an often 'winner-take-all' world. Faced with this, there *is* a legitimate role for Utopian thinking. But the relatively limited achievements of the Third Way programme demonstrate just how difficult things are for any would be inheritor programme, especially one so relatively lacking in coherence. For all this, I do not want to end this review entirely on a negative note. There is much that is thought-provoking, yes, even at times inspirational in this volume that can contribute to debate about a different path for education. This accounts for its favourable reception by other reviewers. My doubt, however, remains whether this in any way adds up to a coherent and realisable Fourth Way programme.

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In the current context of economic and policy gloom, an inspiring new way of educational changes reads like a shock therapy. And this is clearly what the authors are aiming for when they state that times of global economic meltdown are not times for retreating. Their book is an invitation to seek 'intelligent alternatives' aiming for the restoration of economic 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' (xi). Drawing on research-informed examples of initiatives from various contexts (the 'horizons of hope'), the book advocates a set of 'purposes' towards a 'theory of action of sustainable change' (73). We are warned: the Fourth Way is not about letting a thousand flowers bloom (107). There will be standards, targets, hard work and accountability, but for the public good!

The innovation/inspiration/sustainability triptych on which the authors' vision is based is one that is hard to criticise, and so is their critical assessment of past decades of educational strategies and policies, and of the more recent period in particular: for interesting that that their foundations were, Third Way educational approaches deserved a thorough inventory and a bit of stick (we are where we are!).

And this is where Hargreaves and Shirley – confessed fans of the Third Way's 'socially engaged' vision – excel in this book through the identification of the political paths that 'distracted and diverted educators and school reformers from the original ideas of the Third Way' (23). Drawing essentially on illustrations from the United Kingdom (the only context in which the chapter makes sense), Chapter Two explores those distracters as components of a 'new orthodoxy of educational change'. A particularly convincing critique of the 'path of technocracy' describes how the over-reliance and misuse of data have distorted the system and led it to 'ignore and marginalize the importance of moral judgment and professional responsibility' (31).

Unfortunately the book's unacknowledged restricted scope, its perspective (or lack of) on the current 'global' situation and its construction of historical sequences of educational developments all contribute to weakening its message and its wide-ranging ambitions.

Small world

According to their bios (xvii–xviii), the authors have between themselves held visiting positions in more than a dozen countries around the world, including places in the Far East such as Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Japan, which as such gives authority to the statement in Chapter One that 'almost all ideas about change start somewhere else' (3). This also suggests the possibility of a global and truly decentred perspective on the way forward that lacks so badly in governments' white papers invariably stuffed with success stories from World Bank and OECD rankings and reports.[1]

Unfortunately this is not to be, and *The Fourth Way* disappoints in its inability to depart from a narrowly conceived Anglo-American middle-class vision of the global. Drawing essentially on 'home' experiences, the book makes no real attempt at seeking beyond the familiar shores of the United Kingdom, the United States and a couple of much travelled 'outliers' (Fin-

land obviously), the inspiration for the 'truly challenging path' that its authors are proposing. Nowhere is the geographical focus of the book discussed, and between sweeping comments on the 'global' economic meltdown and normative statements on what worked and what did not in the old ways, the closest we get to defining this focus in the introduction is through references to 'most western democracies', and to 'Britain, Canada, and elsewhere ...' (3).

So let us put this right: the book offers a critical exploration of the US/UK navigations through educational reforms since World War II, with a keen interest in the UK's Third Way and how to give it a second chance after the New Labour 'paths of distraction'.[2] This does not make the book less interesting or incisive but says a lot about what it is not capturing: a global perspective on the diversification and convergence processes of 'educational change' (understood here as policy orientations). The references to relationships between schools and public authorities, to teachers' status and careers, to models of standard testing and professional regulation discussed in the book are too restricted to make sense outside the so-called 'Anglo-American countries' (we actually hear little if anything of New Zealand and Australia's Ways in this book). The initiatives developed at the time of the New Labour's Third Way in the educational systems of western countries with more statist and centralised tradition are totally ignored and the social and educational transformations of the past two decades in Eastern and Central Europe not worth a mention. Also ignored is the growing importance of transnational regulatory frameworks (such as the skills agenda of the European Commission), the generalisation of international structural and performance indicators of school systems, and, beyond, the convergence observed *in* local and national policies through the diffusion of 'transnational models of governance'. And where a non Anglo-American success story is drawn upon, the clichés are too tempting to resist:

> At the core of Finland's success and sustainability is its capacity to reconcile, harmonise and integrate a highly performing economy, a superb school system, and a socially just society. Contrast this with the Anglo-American countries where material wealth has been gained at the expense of increasing social division, and at the expense of children's well-being. (52)

There is no place either for the developing and emerging economies in *The Fourth Way*, which is surprising in a world described by the authors as 'becoming more, not less, diverse, global, and interconnected' (106). India and China (a 'burgeoning economic power') only feature in one paragraph as 'international competitors', while the rest of the developing world is offered 'corporate educational responsibility' by multinational corporations and technology transfer as recipes to deliver social justice (81).

The scope of the book is further restricted by the authors' choice of 'spread around the compass' outliers of innovation. Apart from the Finnish case already mentioned, success stories of school networking, strong district leadership or community engagement are all drawn from US and UK policy evaluations. This narrow 'geography of hope' (49) necessarily produces excessive generalisations out of decontextualised 'glimpses of the Fourth way' (a country, a state-wide initiative, a district, etc.) meant to inspire their layers of country-wide reforms.

Only one way forward

The homogenisation of educational processes created by the book's limited scope is further exacerbated by its historical construction and lack of politicisation of educational change phases. The story starts after World War II with the welfare state and its top-down approach to educational expansion (rather than earlier with the secularisation of the curriculum and the public sphere), followed from the mid-1970s (through to the late 1980s) by an 'interregnum of complexity and contradiction' dominated by conservative politics (infusion of market principles into the welfare state, common curriculum, etc.). This logically led to a 'strident second way of markets and standardization' (8). As expected, the excesses of marketisation through parents' choice, competition among schools for resources and standardisation (through curriculum reforms, testing and new inspection regimes) paved the way for ideologies promoting more balanced 'combinations of public, private, and voluntary solutions' (12) through top-down as well as bottom-up initiatives.

Even within the Anglo-American world, the only country ticking all the boxes seems to be England, which is no problem if one reads the book as a critique of the New Labour's 'paths of distraction' that took the country away from the way's 'admirable ends' in a form of betrayal of its promise (19). The United States, according to the authors themselves, never experienced a proper Third Way system, and the only other example reported from the 'Anglo-American' ensemble is the Ontario province of Canada, but we are not told what path of distraction – if any – the province eventually took. The periodisation is therefore problematic and particularly so as the Third Way is looked at as 'system' as well as 'philosophy of change' and seats uncomfortably alongside the First and Second Ways discussed only as broad policy reform.

The Third Way discussion itself – the most documented and analytical section of the book – is narrowly centred on its educational dimension with too little reference to its comprehensive nature. According to Jary (2005, 639), the core elements of the Third Way found in the New Labour agenda linked the economy, civic society (emphasis on rights and responsibility, new citizenship contract, etc.) and public services (equality of opportunity, individually tailored services, secured public goods). Hargreaves and Shirley

seem reluctant to engage critically with the broader public service reform agenda of the Third Way, described by McGuire et al. (2011, 3) as ‘a series of pressures from above, accompanied by pressures of accountability from within each service, and choice of provision from below’. Locating education within the post-welfare state agenda of the New Labour in England would have also allowed comparisons with simultaneous developments in countries such as Germany, inspired by the same project, but taking it on different paths.

The Fourth Way puts together some inspiring initiatives to correct the ‘paths of distraction’ identified by the authors in the Third Way (‘top down delivery’, ‘data-driven decision making’, ‘collective effervescence’) with which their way is nevertheless said to share important commonalities. The book will appeal to teachers with its repeated call for a better recognition of the profession, for placing teachers’ associations at the forefront of change (91) and to forward-thinking head teachers with its promotion of distributed and sustainable leadership (97). More worryingly, their ‘vision’ seems to have also already inspired a Conservative government’s strategy as suggested by the following extract from the recently published White Paper in Great Britain:

> In England, what is needed most of all is decisive action to free our teachers from constraint and improve their professional status and authority, raise the standards set by our curriculum and qualifications to match the best in the world and, having freed schools from external control, hold them effectively to account for the results they achieve. Government should make sure that school funding is fair, with more money for the most disadvantaged, but should then support the efforts of teachers, helping them to learn from one another and from proven best practice, rather than ceaselessly directing them to follow centralised Government initiative. (Department for Education, 2010, 8)

Notes

1. See the Department for Education White Paper (2010, 46) for comments on the value of the OECD’s PISA to ‘understand the standard of our children’s attainment’ and (2010, 67) for more references to OECD in support of formal external assessment as the basis of accountability for performance.
2. See Hargreaves (2008).

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The aim of this book is pretty ambitious. In summary, it presents the case for a characterisation of three epochs of educational thinking and highlights the good and the bad in each, with a particular focus on problems associated with the Third Way. The intention is to challenge what has gone before and inspire new concepts and new ways of thinking to be characterised as a Fourth Way. Such ambition at least deserves a hearing! I should state from the outset that my expertise and frames of reference relate to higher education rather than the compulsory school sector but it is impossible not to be engaged in the policy debates and the current radical overhaul to education being proposed by the Conservative (or Coalition) government in the United Kingdom. In this respect, at least I have enjoyed reading this book and through it formulating and re-thinking ideas around school education. The book is generally engagingly and accessibly written, with moments of humour. The overall mood is one of optimism and it might be possible on a superficial reading to get carried away with the mantras of 'change' and 'hope'. However, coming as I do from a background of critical sociology rather than education *per se*, it is difficult for me to remain in such an optimistic place for too long without just cause. However, this is not to deny the potential power of ideas to inspire and evoke change. But can this book really set out a new programme of thinking to inform and govern educational change?

The three previous epochs of educational change are rather sketchily mapped out: the First Way, characterised by innovation and inconsistency; the Second Way, characterised by markets and standardisation; and the Third Way, characterised by performance and partnerships. Whilst the problems associated with the first two stages are explored, the whole of Chapter Two is dedicated to the case against the Third Way. There are three key problems identified and discussed; autocracy (top-down delivery), technocracy (technical calculations of accountability) and effervescence (short-termism and celebration of fleeting successes). The case presented for these tendencies is clearly argued using examples of injustices and mismanagement from different national systems of education as well as from popular culture, namely sport and film. Hargreaves and Shirley argue, for example, that the Third Way has evoked the 'Path of Technocracy', which has 'converted moral

issues of inequality and social justice that should be a shared social responsibility into technical calculations of student progress targets and achievement gaps that are confined to the school' (29). Much of this criticism would surely resonate with teachers and school leaders in the United Kingdom as well as other countries. Moreover, the idea of 'Deliverology' borrowed from Sir Michael Barber, senior advisor to UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, which potentially results in a 'culture of addictive presentism … with swift solutions and instant highs' (45), would also strike a note of recognition. In principle, I think a strong case is argued quite eloquently here. However, the question is whether Hargreaves and Shirley push the argument too far towards caricature in order to make the point rather than have these ideas firmly grounded in complex realities. For example, they argue that educators 'rush around, energetically and enthusiastically delivering the government's narrowly defined targets and purposes, rather than also developing and realizing inspiring purposes of their own' (41). Educators' experiences as well as the evidence from research studies would tend to paint a much more complex picture that this. Research presented at an inaugural lecture I attended recently showed education leaders taking a more sceptical and proactive approach to policy delivery, attempting where possible to make it fit their own agenda (Baird 2011). As well as the many shortcomings in research evidence, it is also questionable whether this book does justice to presenting a fully complex picture of how the Third Way has been theorised and conceptualised. Only a couple of authors are briefly alluded to – John Naismith and John Dewey – but none of the great architects of the philosophy and theory behind it, which as Giddens (2010) would argue 'was not merely some sort of pragmatism…on the contrary, the values of the left retain their essential relevance'. Certainly, for me there is not enough engagement with the political domain in this book and some definite confusion as to the positioning of the authors, who at time seems to speak from the centre/left but then make assertions about the 'Nanny State' (100), potentially evoking a more right-wing agenda.

In Chapter Three, there is a concern to uncover the secret of educational success stories. There are two key factors, which form the bedrock of positive change, 'community organising' and 'trust'. The former is characterised as having the potential to 'develop communities power and capacity to engage in and agitate for change' (61). Barack Obama is a much cited champion of community organising in the United States. The power of community organising is lauded as 'the wind that shakes the barley'. The success stories include: the Top Performing Nation of Finland; the Innovative and Effective Network, with an example of a UK project entitled 'Raising Achievement, Transforming Learning'; the Democratic Movement, which give examples of community organising such as 'People Acting for Community Together'; the Turned around District, with the example of Tower Hamlets in London where student performance changed from being well below

the national average of the percentage of 5+ GCSE A–C examination results (approximately 20%) in 1994 to matching the national average of around 50% in 2006. The key components of the success in Tower Hamlets was argued to be building the strength of community relations and engagement and also the involvement of local people as volunteer teachers who would also potentially be supported to become certified teachers. One of the most powerful arguments in the book is around the need for 'context driven research and initiatives rather than experimental studies that focus on changing only one single variable' (69). This is further supported by the idea that data should not be treated as gospel truth but rather 'as a process of interaction in a professional learning community'. Both in terms of research data and data used for monitoring purposes, the key point involves understanding this within a context and within a process of mutual discussion and interpretation by the key stakeholders involved. It is indeed a powerful idea but how realistic with the ingrained culture of national and international league tables, particularly evident in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Based on what was learned from these success stories, the stage is set in the final chapter to begin building the promise of a new way forward with an agenda for change. Crucially there are six pillars of purpose, three principles of professionalism and four catalysts of coherence. In summary these refer to issues of moral purpose, public–private investment, high-quality teachers, learning communities, school networks and leadership development. There are some good ideas presented throughout this chapter about important ways of effecting change in education and important principles that should guide this.

An important distinction is made between 'public engagement' with schools and 'public-led' schools, with an emphasis on the importance of the former. As with other arguments in the book, this questions the 'Big Society' idea in the United Kingdom and new plans for 'Free Schools' set out in the White Paper (Department of Education 2010). Important arguments are also made in relation to the GINI index of inequality and the significance of poverty and context in explaining differences in educational achievement, emphasising that societies with the least differentials in wealth also perform better across the education system. It is not then just about changing schools but also changing society. However, the authors then revert back to the rhetoric of individual responsibility and 'doing things for yourself' (80). Some good arguments are also given on how to achieve quality teaching relating to the 'mission, status and conditions' of the teaching profession but this is then linked to also 'aligning practices with moral purposes' (91) Practical suggestions are given, such as using multiple indictors of evaluations, measuring performance over a number of years rather than a snapshot of one year and rewarding professional service given by teachers beyond the school boundary.

There are an array of interesting ideas and potentially inspiring examples of educational change and progress but to what extent does this book provide a programme, a language, a set of principles for change? Can it really claim to be presenting a Fourth Way? There is an acknowledgement of elements of prostelytising by the authors, particularly with regards to their discussions of Obama and community organising. There are also some rather broad-sweep generalisations made throughout the book; for example, where the authors claim that 'leadership finally get some attention in the Third Way' (95). There follows a rather uncritical portrayal of 'distributed leadership' as something that allows success but there are different definitions of distributed leadership and also many problems and difficulties with this approach (Wright 2008)? It is certainly not a recipe for unqualified success. None of this is addressed but instead a couple of examples are given from the previous case studies to illustrate the positive assessment made of distributed leadership. It is tempting to get caught up generally in the mood of optimism in this book but is it presenting ideals that are unrealistic and indeed too uncritical? The 'principles' approach like the seven principles of leadership also seems to potentially lead to lists of hazy platitudes. In some ways, this book is a curious mix of trying to locate big ideas in everyday circumstances and realities through the admittedly important and interesting case studies but in the end is perhaps rather too stuck in certitudes. Leadership, we are told, serves to 'advance our humanity' (99) – is this really the case?

The book ends on a rather utopian note and an extended list of principles. There is indeed much that can usefully inform educational processes of change presented here and it is supported by evidence from the case studies, which are discussed in depth. However, the utopian element comes adrift from the possible, and certainly adrift from a critical reference point. Surprisingly, in the final page the authors argue that 'the age of unregulated markets and wanton greed is disappearing behind us' (111), and so the book really starts to lose me at this point as all sense of 'reality' ebbs away. It could be argued that the Fourth Way is open to the earlier charge of pragmatism that Giddens faced in his defence of the Third Way and possibly also eclecticism, resulting in perhaps an interesting and some might say inspiring set of ideas, but does it really have the substantive theoretical, philosophical or political backdrop to make it a programme for change? Given the significant focus on the idea of community engagement throughout this book and the current prominence that 'The Big Society' is receiving in the United Kingdom and the move to 'Free Schools' taken outside local education authority control, I will give the last word to Giddens in his partial defence of the Third Way:

> In my book [*The Third Way*] . . . I gave a lot of attention to civil society – the Big Society, as the Tories now call it. Yet civil society will not flourish if the

> state is pared back. Public goals can best be achieved if there is an effective and dynamic balance between the state, marketplace and the civic order. Each acts as a check on the other and also provides a stimulus and challenge to them. The recover of community, civic pride and local cohesion should be a concern of social democratic politics. These can't be founded (Tories take note) upon nostalgia for a disappeared – and often imaginary – past of social harmony but have to be achieved through new mechanisms. (2010, 3)

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