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## **Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School**

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## Reviews (I)

Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*. New York: Teachers College Press. ISBN: 0807753327

Last year, late in 2011, when browsing the internet, I came across an advertisement introducing the publication of Hargreaves and Fullan's new book then titled *Teaching Like a Pro* - a sequel to the landmark book, *What's Worth Fighting for in Your Schools?* co-written by the authors' almost two decades ago. This aroused my excitement to read the book, but I had to wait until I got the volume in Vancouver when I attended the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association (AERA) in April 2012. Was the new book worth waiting for? Of course! I was so fascinated by the rich and insightful line of thought and the witty but unabashedly penetrating analyses of the realities of the teaching profession that I couldn't put it down throughout my flight back to South Korea. In essence, this book explores how to reconstruct and reculture every classroom and every school for "the radical betterment rather than a heroic teacher or a great school here and there - not just good enough but very good or great in their cumulative impact." (p. 21). Successfully capitalizing on the concept of capital, they argue that as capital must circulate if assets are going to grow, *Teaching like a pro* is about developing, circulating, and reinvesting professional capital (p. 23).

An introductory chapter lays out the book's unifying concept of capital. Comparing business capital that provides short-term gain at best and depletes quickly with professional capital that is regenerative, the authors build a strong framework that is referenced throughout the book.

Chapters 2 and 3 delve into the competing views and debunk stereotypes of teaching by juxtaposing the staggering realities of teaching that have been imperiled under the businesscapital strategies in the US over the past 30 years and the vibrant and inspiring realities in high-performing countries -Finland, Singapore, South Korea, and Canada, which have been pursuing individual and collective capital of the entire profession. Chapter 4 discusses the five ingredients that enable the teacher force to become highly effective: capability, commitment, career, culture, and contexts or conditions of teaching. Chapter 5 fleshes out professional capital by illuminating the inextricably connected three subsets of professional capital: human, social, and decisional. Chapter 6 examines the role of professional culture and community in developing and circulating professional capital. A concluding chapter summarizes the professional capital agenda and offers concrete action guidelines for teachers, administrators, union leaders, and policy makers. Though this book certainly is of interest to researchers, it should be required reading for teachers, administrators, policy makers, teacher union leaders, and teacher educators.

I appreciate that Hargreaves and Fullan introduce a novel concept of decisional capital in the definition of professional capital. In so doing, they confront the potential dangers inherent in the increasingly popular mantras of data-driven reform movements that paralyze teachers. Challenging the potentially problematic assumption that data guides decisions on its own, the authors argue that teachers guide decisions, and to make these decisions takes the tremendous collective intelligence of teachers to make sense out of the deluge of crude data. Indeed, in spite of a great deal of policy and reform activity that have emphasized data use, there is shockingly little empirical research on how educators deal with data in their workplace settings. The concept of decisional capital provides researchers with a conceptual and moral compass for the new journey toward this uncharted research avenue.

My view is that this book's major contribution is to bring teachers back in, but in a different way. In *Professional Capital*, Hargreaves and Fullan envision a specific kind of change premised on professional capital. They term this change strategy "structured insurgency" in which small groups of teachers band together and become vanguards of large

scale reforms. This conceptualization of small but transformative change provides a welcome counterpoint to the rise of large-scale-reform that relies primarily on increased bureaucratic control and externally-driven macro-level forces.

To conclude, in this volume, Hargreaves and Fullan have brought their earlier work another big step forward and made a valuable addition to the literature on educational change. Every so often a new concept emerges that changes the existing terrain, exciting many people to engage in an intellectual whirlwind. Hargreaves and Fullan's *Professional Capital* emerges as such an intriguing book. I look forward to the application of Hargreaves and Fullan's work in the future scholarship and seeing their work develop, which primes an inevitable 'threequel' some years from now.

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