

Dr. Roman Petryshyn

Director of Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre,
Grant MacEwan College

“Polar Opposites” are the Keys to Successful Continuous Change
A Case Study on Improving Educational Opportunities for Students
with Hearing Disabilities in Ukraine .

How can Ukrainian and Canadian social scientists work together to achieve the next five-year research plans of the Institute of Special Pedagogy in order to improve the educational opportunities for children with special needs? Is there a model to follow of how change occurs in educational systems, so that researchers both in Canada and Ukraine can share common assumptions and a common language in our dialogue? How will the process, of transforming Ukraine’s segregated educational system into an inclusive one, take place?

Some of the above questions can be explored by looking at an existing model and methods for structuring and researching change, which has already proven to be effective and relevant in educational environments, particularly that in Ukraine. Using this model it may be possible to develop capacities for reform which Ukrainian officials will accept, take ownership of and make their own.

Coming as we do from Canada, I wish to introduce you to a leading author and expert on change in educational systems in Canada – Professor Michael Fullan. He is an internationally respected scholar who is currently leading the transformation of Britain’s educational system. His main message is that change must happen with a delicate and equal balance of government support and pressure. With his methods he has succeeded in raising the mathematics and reading standards in Britain, while insisting that the performance gap between the poorest and best students continue to narrow.

My purposes for this paper are to offer up the Fullan model for discussion to determine if it will be useful for our joint research projects over the next five years, to confirm whether it is effective in your view for the Ukrainian context, and to see whether the assumptions and language of this model will suit the needs of Ukrainian educators, administrators and parents who are educating children with special needs.

In his seminal book *Change Forces – Probing the Depths of Educational Reform* Michael Fullan summarizes eight key lessons for improvement and change in the education system. His general thesis is that changes in education are so complex that no one strategy or authority can achieve real or deep change by itself. Instead we must set our sights on changing the culture of schools and the education system, that is, change everyone involved. Fullan gives us the following eight lessons about change.

You cannot force change. The more complex it is, the less you can force it. People do not and cannot change by being told to do so. The only ways for change to occur is to create conditions that enable and encourage people to consider personal and shared visions, and skill development over time.

You can only create meaningful changes by launching the process without a predetermined end. A change is a journey and you don't know in advance, what is going to be the solution. One needs an attitude in favour of risk taking and climate that encourages risk taking and innovation. The process involves uncertainty, anxiety, difficulties and learning. If there is a greater moral purpose and capacity for change, the chances are greater for success than failure. There is an element of luck involved. There will be moments of high satisfaction and moments of frustration. Controlling emotion will enhance the quality of experience for the participants.

Problems are inevitable, and in fact should be welcomed. They will occur and we need them to learn. Unless we actively seek and confront real problem we won't develop an effective creative solutions to complex situations. In this sense effective schools "embrace problems" rather than avoid them. The least effective schools are "shallow caring" – do nothing, procrastinating, coasting and maintaining only the appearance of a cohesive

team. Instead the proper way is to ask uncomfortable questions until the source of difficulties is exposed. We need to value the process of finding solutions.

The above approach, which I call “community development” since it includes action research in the community, is the method that has been followed over the past five years by a joint Canadian project in Ukraine on improving educational opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students. I will use this example as a case study because it uses community development methods, comparable to similar methods used with other cases in Europe and North America.

Let me relate a story - a true story - in order to demonstrate to what extent whether educational reform in Ukraine is enhanced by to the framework that Prof Fullan described in the above three, plus five other guidelines. It will focus on real people from Canada and Ukraine and a real process of educational change that has benefitted the deaf and hard of hearing in Ukraine .

Our cast of characters starts with Ihor. He is a teacher who takes the initiative to travel and bring new knowledge and resources back to his school in Lviv. Ihor has a moral purpose-- to help his students, his school and his family. Fortunately his principal Yuri shares those objectives. He makes it possible for Ihor to be away from the school while holding onto his job. Through various contacts Ihor travels first to Holland to see whom he can get to know and what donations he can collect for his school. Through family connections Ihor then seeks out the opportunity to visit Canada. As a result of earlier Ukrainian settlement in Alberta having started in 1892, there is an endowed Ukrainian centre at a college in Edmonton. Ihor meets Roman who works at the centre and gets to visit Edmonton for a year in 1998-99. During his time in Edmonton Ihor goes out and meets many people and persuades them to support his projects, including sending a dozen older computers to his school. With donated money, he renovates a room at his school and sets up the first computer class for deaf and hard of hearing students in Ukraine and is the first to begin teaching English to deaf children. Ihor's original objective of finding resources has been met.

However, since the stone has been thrown in the water, other ripples are beginning to form.

4) Ihor's case demonstrates Fullan's fourth lesson. For teachers and schools to be effective, their moral purposes must be linked to a larger social goal. Teachers must want to change both students and their school wide conditions. Schools and other learning organizations also must focus on both their mandate and external environment, responding and contributing to issues of the day. Creating "Learning Organizations", which is our objective, requires that teachers and principals know that their environment contains the seeds of their future development.

Ihor's effort, which initially was only for his own people in Lviv, began to have a cascading effect as he met more people, and notably, the Canadian Professor. On Ihor's invitation, a Professor from Canada goes to Ukraine and, naturally, meets other Professors in Kyiv, whom he invites to visit Canada to see the facilities and programs there. After exchanging visits, the Professors compare the situations in the two country and decide to hold a summer educational camp for deaf students along with their teachers and parents. Although not customary in Ukraine, this model of having three educational categories of participants is common in the west . It is known that parents are key to their childrens' success and so parents need to be strengthened and empowered as a group of advocates. The first summer camp is held at Artek in Crimea in 2000 and was attended by sixty participants. The camp was very successful as judged by the three categories of participants but, as the first, was the most difficult in transferring to Ukraine the ideas and process of community development described by Fullan.

Along with the summer camp in 2000 the Canadian Professor persuaded several western manufacturing companies to visit Ukraine and donate hearing aids to 120 children during the first delegation's visit. This opened up a relationship between the owners and employees of western and Ukrainian companies and involved them and other community organizations in the educational process. Oleksandr, who was both in the pedagogical and

commercial worlds, was among the most energetic volunteers to support the summer schools and remains the key organizer in Ukraine today.

To carry on this work , both the Ukrainian and Canadian sides agreed to create and register non-governmental organizations in each country, using the same name, “Alliance”. A group of volunteers in Canada formed to raise money and send observers to the camps, while a group of people in Ukraine agreed to become responsible for organizing and partially funding future summer education camps. Within this framework, in 2001, the Canadian and Ukrainian “Alliance” organizations put on three summer schools (i.e. in Khust, Kharkiv and Odessa) attended by 140 participants. In the following year, school principals, who in 2000 were reluctant to get involved without approval, by 2002, were enthusiastic and organized nine locations for 360 participants (ie. in Kyiv, Lugansk, Khust, L'viv, Zaporizzja, Mikolaiv, Kherson, Pidkamin, Odessa). In order to deal with the multiplication of schools, in 2003 the two Alliances decided to build up regional centres ,who are then to help local schools in their areas. In this way the regional summer camps are meant to reach all 59 schools for the deaf in Ukraine. In 2003 the two Alliances offered two regional summer camps (ie, in Kharkiv and Khust). People came from various schools with a total attendance of 160. Since 2000, there have been 15 summer camps, 4 training sessions and a summit conference. Over 750 deaf and hard of hearing students, their parents, teachers, community representatives, professors and functionaries have learned, played and communicated with one another in various locations across Ukraine. In July and August of 2004, the two Alliances will again be holding their fifth year of activity, namely the next two regional camps in Zaporizzja and Kam'janets-Podilsky.

Aside from the success measured in terms of numbers of teachers, students, community people and parents in attendance, the summer camps have had an enormous impact on peoples' attitudes and world view. They have been successful because they are forums where new ideas are given the chance to emerge, under a program deliberately structured to be open to the process of change. Issues were sought out from each of the participant categories , without answers being pre-determined. Such was the case with the use of sign language, which since the 1930s in the Soviet Union had

been officially discouraged in the educational system. The Ukrainian side saw Canadian professionals use signing in their teaching and saw how quickly American sign language (ASL) users could learn to communicate with Ukrainian sign language (USL) users. This stimulated Ukrainian teachers and parents to want to learn to sign and use sign language in their teaching process because they saw that hearing teachers can better communicate with their students in this way. As a result, videotaping and documentation of Ukrainian signs is now being done and experimentation with teaching in sign language is now underway. In 2003-04 the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine advised special schools for the deaf to introduce a course on Ukrainian sign language and English. Analogous processes of change are also beginning to happen in other areas (e.g. with pre-school early detection of deafness, and with training of mainstream teachers about students with disabilities).

5) These examples demonstrate lessons five and six described by Professor Fullan in his book. He says that culture change requires both individualism and collegiality. It requires overcoming the isolation and conservatism of the teacher, while not succumbing to the dominance of the group. But collaboration in groups should not squash the individual's capacity to think and work independently. In fact, individuality is essential to educational reform, which requires diversity and an individual's persistent search for answers. Neither extreme in polarities—a tight knit culture or too loose and unstable a culture – is desirable. What's needed is cultural change in the relationship of the individual to the group. This requires a view of culture as EMERGENT, that is, coming from an individual personal belief, but open to questioning and further learning. To be continuously innovative, the emphasis should be on questioning the culture, not only sharing it.

6) Lesson six says that no one person can understand what it will take to improve a complex organization. So it follows that we cannot leave the process of reform to someone else. This means that change cannot be established only by formal leaders working by themselves. The system needs each and every teacher and principal to create a learning organization capable of continuous inquiry and self-renewal, or else improvement will not happen. Relying on bureaucratic structures will destroy those leaders

who use common sense and have a moral purpose. Bureaucracy's purpose is to concentrate on How? things are done. We need people to ask the question Why? things are done as they are. Bureaucracy measures costs without understanding real costs and removes from democracy its greatest strength – the ability to act in an unconventional manner. A bureaucratic system is designed for the *status quo*. Instead we need to look to teachers and principals who have a moral purpose and skills to engage with other like-minded individuals and groups, to form a critical mass and culture necessary to bring about continuous change.

Throughout the process of organizing summer educational camps, the Canadian Professor and his colleagues continued to develop a relationship with the Academy in Ukraine. A research project on sign language was undertaken. A video link between deaf children in Kyiv and Calgary was demonstrated. Canadians participated in Kyiv at the First National Conference on the Problems in Deafness. The Alliance published its first book titled *Civic Education and Socialization of Children with Hearing Impairments*. A scholarship was arranged to bring students to do graduate studies at the University of Alberta. Then in February 2004 an invitation was extended to a Ukrainian Academician to visit Edmonton to sign a joint agreement and launch a five-year research project. There he became familiar not only with the methods and practices that Canadians use in educating students with hearing impairments, but also with the practise of inclusive education that applies to students with all disabilities..It is clear that a major system change can only occur when the initiatives of individuals are supported and magnified by the central administration in the country. Fullan's seventh lesson on change is correct when he makes the following assertion.

7) Both centralization and decentralization together are necessary. The centre and local schools need each other, Whats required is continuous negotiation and simultaneous top-down and bottom-up mutual influence. While traditional organizations control peoples' behaviour, new Learning Organizations seek to : improve the quality of thinking; increase reflection and team learning; and develop the ability to share understanding of complex issues.

The case of Canadian involvement since 1998 with Ukraine's schools for deaf students has been a story built on the initiative and skills of individuals. They deliberately focussed their attention on interacting with the front-line individuals, such as students, teachers and parents, starting at the grass roots level. The project worked from the bottom upwards, knowing that the time would come to involve national and international organizations, and being aware of Fullan's eighth lesson, which says that premature strategic planning can close off creative options.

8) Under conditions of dynamic complexity, one first needs interaction to create a vision. Progress towards a vision is generated through action. Once created, this vision must be shared, if it is to be successful. Generative learning--expanding your ability to create – occurs only when people are striving to accomplish something that matters deeply to them. Unless participants develop their own personal visions, all they can do is accept someone else's vision. The result is compliance, never commitment. Reliance on visions perpetuates cultures of dependence and conformity, which obstructs questioning and action learning necessary for innovation.

Today we find ourselves at a formal international meeting of the Institute of Special Pedagogy, and not insignificantly, without children with disabilities and their parents being present. We are here as a new joint formation – the Canada Ukraine Research Team – to discuss how best to research and plan what should take place at the institutional level to improve the methods and services being provided to children with disabilities. Let us not forget that this international partnership is just one aspect in a complex process of cultural change that is occurring at various levels, which simultaneously must : encourage teachers who show individual initiative; support principals and administrators who are willing to act “outside the box”; and empower parents and community activists to become advocates for their children. For front-line services to change, there must be both top-down and bottom-up action from every level. In Michael Fullan's words:

“There is a pattern underlying the eight lessons of dynamic change and it concerns one's ability to work with polar opposites: simultaneously

pushing for change while allowing self-learning to unfold; being prepared for a journey of uncertainty; seeing problems as sources of creative resolution; having a vision but not being blinded by it; valuing the individual and the group; incorporating centralizing and decentralizing forces; being internally cohesive, but externally oriented; and valuing personal change agency as the route to system change.”

The above case study, which has shown how improvements have been made in the Ukrainian system of educating students with hearing disabilities, shows that a community development model and action research methods, can and do work in practice in Ukraine. As we launch our new partnership, Fullan’s model may be helpful in providing us with a common set of ideas and common terms, in a defined framework, within which we can share common understandings and communicate meaningfully between ourselves as we work together across two different societal contexts in Canada