

COGNITIVE CAPITAL



Investing in Teacher Quality

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Foreword by Michael Fullan

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Foreword

Andy Hargreaves and I published a book called *Professional Capital* in which we suggested that there are three kinds of capital for teachers: human, social, and decisional. Human capital is the quality of the individual, social capital is the quality of the group, and decisional capital is the cumulative insights of learning through experience to acquire expert judgment relative to one's craft. We did not flesh out the details of decisional capital. Costa, Garmston, and Zimmerman—a fair amount of decisional capital in that trio—bring their insights to bear on the bigger and deeper meaning of cognitive capital. The result is a gem of a book. Cognitive capital is what goes on in the teacher's head. Once you understand that key phenomenon, you must follow a new path that honors the complexity of the profession. And that is exactly what these authors do.

The authors start with *Teacher Quality: A Declaration*, a list of ten main truths that form the basis of teaching and the leadership that will be required for cognitive capital to flourish. From this basic point of departure Costa, Garmston, and Zimmerman offer a simple but comprehensive model for building cognitive capital consisting of four main components: knowledge of the teaching profession, repertoire of teaching skills, knowledge of the curriculum, and repertoire of student interventions. With this vantage point the authors delve into 5 states of mind: efficacy (which generates effort), flexibility (expands repertoire), craftsmanship (evokes fidelity), consciousness (informs improvement), and interdependence (grows intelligence). With this elegant model—the declaration, the four components of teaching and learning, and the five states of mind the authors take us on tour of the complexities of teaching. This journey enables us to see clearly and to appreciate the nature of the teaching profession.

What is especially powerful about this book is that we are first brought to appreciate *individual cognitive capital* that is parlayed into ideas for developing *collective capital*. There is so much in this compact book about leadership: differences among presenting, facilitating, consulting, and coaching; about mediating that 'liberates the states of mind'; about coaching tools that built trust and rapport; and about how consultants manage relationships.

What I especially like about *Cognitive Capital* is that the case made by the authors directly and indirectly destroys any notions of superficial accountability

that abound in current policies at state and federal levels. There is a great discussion of prescriptions vs. accountable dialogue. The final chapter of the book, *Auditing: Promoting Systems Accountability*, contains a practical theory of development in its own right. Cognitive capital as a “system asset” is portrayed, as are talent optimization, career ladders and other matters that would support fundamental and continuous learning in the profession.

Cognitive Capital puts coaching in a new, more profound light as a system resource. To read the first few pages of this book is to instantly appreciate it; to read it through is to become a better change agent whatever your role in the education system.

—Michael Fullan

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Preface

The hidden connection is stronger than the obvious one.

—Heraclitus of Ephesus

The enduring thread that has held us together over the course of our careers has been our desire to develop schools as homes for the mind. Over 30 years we have come to a deep understanding about what this means. This book is an explicit reflection on what we have learned about developing thoughtful professionals and schools that foster *cognitive capital*.

When we began to focus on building a community of *cognitive coaches*, we did not realize the emergent quality of our learning. It was fitting that Art and Bob, inspired by the focus on high craftsmanship of Ben Franklin's Leather Apron Club, used this metaphor to create opportunities for mutual improvement and forums of inquiry. The key was an entrepreneurial focus—a gathering of educators to debate and create schools as homes for the mind. In the early years of what we term Cognitive Coaching we met twice a year to inquire about what we were learning from practice, teaching both children and adults. Our work had purpose; it was intentional and goal focused and generated great success stories. Gradually, we began to appreciate the emergent qualities—new understandings became apparent as a result of interactions in the community. One such understanding grew into 5 powerful *states of mind*, which will receive major focus in this book. Indeed, the original leaders from Cognitive Coaching have stayed connected and have gone on to expand their learning in many directions, some of them authoring their own books. Our initial work on Cognitive Coaching, the glue that binds us together for a lifetime, has provided a powerful catalyst for success; we wanted to tell our story about how.

But why? What was it that made 5 particular states of mind, which were unique to Cognitive Coaching, so powerful and enduring? While pondering how our work fostered human capital, or as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) term it, “professional capital,” came the idea of *cognitive capital*; we immediately knew that apart and together our undying mission had been to build cognitive capital. Inspired, we found we had much to say about what cognitive capital was and why it was important now, in this global information age. We had many ideas

about how to form a coherent action plan—how to build a shared future based on individual and collective investments in cognitive capital.

In fact, it was through the current emphasis on teacher evaluation that we finally recognized that any attempt to enact change from the outside, with directives, standards, rubrics, judgments, or new evaluation tools, violated one of our core values. If we have learned one lesson in our professional lives it is that for change to happen, it needs to be understood, practiced, and ultimately owned by those who will act on the knowledge—and that this is much easier said than done. This book tells our story and sets out a theory of practice for fostering cognitive capital.

We each bring a unique perspective to this work in that we have focused on multiple pathways for building schools as homes for the mind. Each one of us has our own store of cognitive capital that has informed our life's work. By way of introduction we each tell how our own personal questions have fostered our understanding of cognitive capital.

Art Costa: Starting my educational career as a middle school science teacher, I intuitively knew that developing curiosity, wonderment, and thinking like a scientist was as important for my students to learn as was the science content of the text. While I couldn't articulate it then, my years of experience in education taught me to always value the bigger picture, the lifelong essentials, and the human capacities for ongoing learning. Learning from J. Richard Suchman and Hilda Taba, I also came to realize that the gates of learning are opened from within and that the motivation to learn and change could not be externally coerced. Still later, learning from the Israeli psychologist Reuven Feuerstein, I discovered the power of mediation and saw that one's actions are a function of one's internal thought processes—that there would be no change in behavior without a corresponding change in cognition. As a professor of instructional supervision, I taught future administrators a form of supervision richly imbued with mediative strategies, stressing their role as enhancers of teacher's cognition. That was probably my naive source of cognitive capital. Today I know that the wealth of an organization such as a school is measured by the cumulative intelligence of the organization's members, and that it is the critical role of leadership to develop and manage that resource well.

Bob Garmston: In 2011, I published my autobiography, *I Don't Do That Anymore: A Memoir of Awakening and Resilience*. Separated from my parents, I lived in a series of children's homes and with a foster family. In the book, I describe how I first became aware of a sense of personal efficacy when in the 8th grade I was hospitalized after rubbing poison oak on my face to get out of school. (It worked better than I imagined.) I had time to reflect. Why was I so unpopular and picked on, I wondered. Kids stole stuff from my locker and then

laughed about it. One of them snubbed me. I was afraid of another, someone didn't like me, and others teased me constantly. I was accused of things I hadn't done. It wasn't my fault; they were jerks. But gradually, through the miracle of loneliness and the reflection that it prompted, I began thinking about things differently. I imagined myself in that hospital bed seeing my life as a movie. From that perspective, I was able to see some of the effects I had on others. Maybe the problem was me. Maybe I was inviting trouble. I thought about this for a few days, wondering what I could do differently. I did behave differently after my stay in the hospital. My life improved.

I later studied with J. Richard Suchman, known as the father of inquiry training, and psychologists Carl Rogers and Fritz Perls, among others. With them I witnessed and learned strategies for evoking consciousness and efficacy in others as well as myself. In my work a sense of personal efficacy was always with me and was often realized collectively. One example stands out. As a principal I developed a disconnected staff into a cohesive team, skilled in communications and problem solving. Desirous of a better reading program for students, they overcame the objections of the teachers union and superintendent to win the right to restructure the school day in order to implement a new program. What was deemed unlikely to succeed did succeed, through the smart work and collective efficacy of the teachers. Throughout my career, this collective efficacy—the power of the group to accomplish the impossible—has fueled my work.

Diane Zimmerman: Being the oldest of six, I learned early on that collective work was more fun than going it alone. From those early years I learned to ask, “How can I capitalize on the talents of each individual? And how can I foster the power of the group to get work done?” I give credit to my father for fostering in me a love for non-conventional thinking and for the power of unanswered questions. I now laugh at the irony of my first year of teaching, when I was given a completely empty classroom devoid of furniture, with no textbooks or prescribed curriculum. With no expectations from an external source, the entire burden was on me. I asked, “Out of this emptiness, how can I build a language-rich environment to get these kids talking?” It was in the early years of teaching that I discovered that I could take what I had learned from the family business and become a learning entrepreneur, by inventing my own minischool for 3-to-6-year-olds with difficulties in communication. Further, my training as a speech and language specialist had thrust me into supervised therapy sessions, precursors to individual education plans, where I asked questions steeped in goal-focused learning and the assessment of efficacy. I cannot remember a time when I did not ask, “How has this intervention made a difference, and what can I learn to inform the next step?” It was my work as a principal for 13 years that has most informed my thinking about cognitive capital, and it is the teachers whom I had the pleasure of collaborating with as a principal and superintendent that

gave me a deep, vicarious understanding of teaching and learning. As I reflect on my career I have always been amazed by the collective power of a group to develop practices that are learner affirming.

Together, the three of us invite you to join us in this journey, the study of what it means to grow cognitive capital and to build schools that invest in the mind, both in body and spirit. As you begin to read this book, we suggest that you take an inventory of your own personal cognitive capital. What questions do you ask over and over? Where are your points of passion and excellence? What magic do you have that connects with your students, your colleagues, and their learning? How does this internal knowledge show up in your practices? Therein lies your initial investment in cognitive capital.

Now here's the rub: Capital has no value unless it lives in a shared economy. What we propose in this book is that it is not enough to build our own capital; we must do so in contribution to others, to better learning, and to a better world. Indeed, at the end of the day, this is the contribution that matters. We cite a challenge from the seminal systems thinker Peter Senge (2000) to get you thinking as you read: "Learning is not an 'add on,' to be done when we have some free time or at training sessions. Some of the most significant innovations have been in infrastructures and day-to-day practices, allowing teams and intact work groups to integrate working and learning" (pp. 280–281).