



Who Controls Teachers' Work?: Power and Accountability in America's Schools

Richard M. Ingersoll

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Schools are places of learning but they are also workplaces, and teachers are employees. As such, are teachers more akin to professionals or to factory workers in the amount of control they have over their work? And what difference does it make?

Drawing on large national surveys as well as wide-ranging interviews with high school teachers and administrators, Richard Ingersoll reveals the shortcomings in the two opposing viewpoints that dominate thought on this subject: that schools are too decentralized and lack adequate control and accountability; and that schools are too centralized, giving teachers too little autonomy. Both views, he shows, overlook one of the most important parts of teachers' work: schools are not simply organizations engineered to deliver academic instruction to students, as measured by test scores; schools and teachers also play a large part in the social and behavioral development of our children. As a result, both views overlook the power of implicit social controls in schools that are virtually invisible to outsiders but keenly felt by insiders. Given these blind spots, this book demonstrates that reforms from either camp begin with inaccurate premises about how schools work and so are bound not only to fail, but to exacerbate the problems they propose to solve.

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