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Accountability, Control, and Teachers' Work in American Schools

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Introduction

Few educational issues have received more attention in recent times than the problem of ensuring that elementary and secondary classrooms are staffed with quality teachers. This concern is unsurprising—elementary and secondary schooling is mandatory in most nations and it is into the care of teachers that children are legally placed for a significant portion of their lives. The quality of teachers and teaching is undoubtedly among the most important factors shaping the learning and growth of students. Moreover, typically the largest single component of the cost of education is teacher compensation. Seemingly endless streams of commissions and national reports have targeted improving teacher quality as one of the central challenges facing schools. Critics have blamed the performance of teachers for myriad social ills: the erosion of American economic competitiveness, the decline in student academic achievement, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, a decline in morals, gender and racial stereotyping and discrimination, and on and on (for examples or reviews, see Bennett, 1993; Goldstein, 2015; Levin, 1998; Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Santoro, 2011; Thomas, 2010; Urban League, 1999). As a result, in recent decades a host of initiatives seeking to upgrade teacher quality have been pushed by reformers.

Although ensuring that classrooms are all staffed with quality teachers is a perennially important issue in schools, in our view it is also among the least understood. This misunderstanding centers on the reasons behind the purportedly low quality of teachers and teaching in schools, and it has undermined the success of reform efforts. Behind the criticism and reforms are a variety of differing perspectives as to the sources of the problems plaguing the teaching occupation.

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One of the most popular perspectives relates to the accountability and control of teachers in schools. Schools, this view claims, are marked by low standards, poor management, and little effort to ensure adequate supervision, especially in regard to their primary activity—the work of teachers with students. Given the nature of teachers' work, such concern is understandable. Not only do schools instruct students in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but they are also a major mechanism for the socialization of children, a process captured in the concept of social capital (Coleman, 1987; Grant, 1988). The task of deciding which behaviors and values are proper and best for the young is not trivial, neutral, or value free. Hence, it is no surprise that those who do this work—teachers—and how they go about it, are matters of intense concern. Indeed, underlying the accountability perspective is the understandable assumption that education is too important to be left solely up to educators. From the teacher accountability perspective, the concern is that teachers are often not held accountable and simply do what they want behind the closed classroom doors. The predictable result, this view holds, is low-quality performance on the part of teachers and students (Elmore, 2000; Finn, Kanstoroon, & Petrilli,1999; Thomas, 2010).

For those who subscribe to this teacher accountability perspective, the obvious route to improvement is to enhance organizational control in schools and to hold teachers more accountable; in short, to "tighten the ship." Proponents of this perspective advocate mechanisms of control, such as teacher examinations, standardized curricula, and especially the implementation of explicit performance standards, coupled with more rigorous teacher evaluation.

A prominent focus of the teacher accountability perspective and reform movement is to change the traditional ways that teachers have been evaluated, and rewarded, in regard to employment decisions about teacher hiring, layoffs, promotions, and salary (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2010; New Teacher Project, 2010). The traditional public school approach bases these decisions primarily on measures of teachers' qualifications, including years of experience, degrees completed, and types of licensure. Many accountability proponents deny the existence of a strong link between these traditional measures of qualifications and the actual performance of teachers, pushing, in turn, to replace the former with new approaches that better capture teacher quality. A variety of methods have been developed and implemented, such as the controversial "value-added" model, which attempts to assess teachers by measuring gains in their students' test scores (Hershberg, 2005).

The theory of action behind teacher accountability-based reforms posits a series of sequential steps: establishing performance standards for teachers, utilizing assessments—often students' standardized test scores—to gauge student and teacher performance in regard to the standards, and instituting incentives and sanctions to induce teacher improvement (see Figure 7.1). Many of these mechanisms have become widely used, especially since the advent of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Often underlying this theory of action is what might be called a "teacher deficit" assumption. In this assumption the primary source of low-quality teaching in schools lies in various

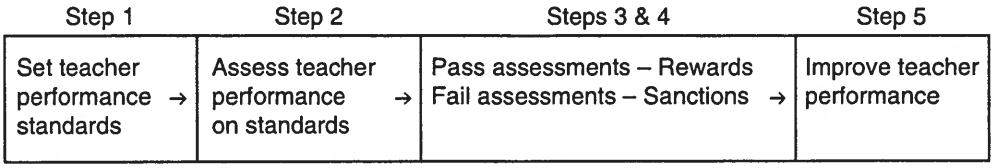

Figure 7.1 The theory of educational accountability.

deficits in teachers themselves—their ability, commitment, or effort. The best way to fix schools, it is then argued, is to fix these deficits in individual teachers through increased regulations, incentives, and sanctions.

A lack of accountability and control is, of course, not the only explanation given for the problem of low-quality teachers and teaching. But it is a prominent view and has had an increasing impact on reform and policy.

Objectives

The teacher accountability perspective and its reforms have been the subject of a growing body of criticism—from a variety of perspectives, and focused on a variety of aspects of the theory underlying accountability, the reforms it has spawned, and the outcomes it has engendered. In this chapter we add another critique of this teacher accountability perspective, utilizing an unusual theoretical perspective—one drawn from the sociology of organizations, occupations, and work. Our operating premise is that fully understanding issues of teacher quality requires examining the character of the teaching occupation, and the character of the organizations in which teachers work. Unlike the teacher-deficit viewpoint, this perspective seeks to illuminate the ways the organizational conditions of schools, and the character of the teaching occupation, contribute to the problem of teaching quality.

In particular, we focus on the distribution, mechanisms, and effects of control and power in schools. Our argument is that the teacher accountability perspective overlooks some of the most important sources and forms of organizational accountability and control that already exist in schools and, as a result, overlooks the ways school management and organizations contribute to the teacher quality problem. In plain terms, our argument is that poorly run schools can make otherwise excellent teachers not so excellent.

Our view is that proponents of the teacher-accountability perspective identify important issues and problems. Accountability in schools is reasonable and necessary, and the public has a right and, indeed, an obligation to be concerned with the performance of teachers. There is no doubt that some teachers are poorly performing and inadequate for the job, in one way or another. Our argument, however, is that the teacher-accountability perspective involves a flawed diagnosis of the source of teacher quality problems and hence offers inadequate prescriptions to fix such problems. As a result of a partial, one-sided explanation of the source of teacher quality problems, we argue, teacher-accountability reforms often do not work, and can even make things worse.

This chapter does not report in detail on a single empirical study of accountability and control in schools. Rather it bolsters our above argument by synthesizing the results of a series of research projects we have undertaken over the past two decades on the levels, distribution, and effects of accountability and control in American schools (Ingersoll, 2003, 2004, 2012; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2016, in press). Throughout this chapter, we update our earlier findings with the most recent data available.

Our objective is to address three sets of questions:

1) *Who controls teachers work?* How does the distribution of control in the US educational system compare to that in other nations? Are schools highly centralized organizations, or are they more participatory and decentralized workplaces? Do teachers have influence equivalent to that of traditional professionals, or more like that of lower-level employees?
2) *What is the balance between teachers' responsibilities and teachers' control?* What is the role of teachers in schools, especially in regard to the degree of responsibility and accountability required of them, and the degree of control and power delegated to them?
3) *What difference does teacher control make?* What difference does the amount of centralization or decentralization in schools make for how well schools function? What effect does the amount of teacher influence and control have on student academic achievement?

In the next section, we briefly describe the data and concepts used in our research projects. Then, we interpret our results to answer the three research questions. We close by discussing the implications of our data for the accountability perspective and suggest an alternative approach to school organization that attempts to balance the needs for both organizational accountability and employee autonomy and control.

Data and Concepts

In this chapter, we draw from our analyses of a wide array of data. One source of data for our analyses was the nationally representative Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), along with its supplement, the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). SASS/TFS is the largest and most comprehensive data source available on elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), along with the US Census Bureau, periodically collect the SASS data from a random sample of schools stratified by state, public/private sector, and school level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011–2013). Each SASS cycle includes questionnaires for a random sample of teachers in each school and for school-level and district-level administrators. In addition, after 12 months, the same schools are again contacted, and all those in the original teacher sample who had left their teaching jobs are given a second questionnaire to obtain information on their departures. This latter group, along with a representative sample of those who stayed in their teaching jobs, comprises the TFS. To date, seven SASS/TFS cycles have been conducted

between 1987 and 2013 (for more information on SASS, see Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013; for more information on TFS, see Graham, Parmer, Chambers, Tourkin, & Lyter, 2011). For this chapter, we draw from our analyses of the SASS/TFS data on school decision making, teacher autonomy, and accountability.

Another source of data for our analyses was the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). OECD is a leading international research and development organization and one of the best sources of international data on education. For this chapter we drew from our analyses of data from a series of surveys of school control and governance conducted by the OECD—beginning in 1990–1991 with the International Survey of the Locus of Decision-Making in Educational Systems, and since 2000, as part of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The objective of these surveys has been to ascertain the extent of centralization of the elementary/secondary educational systems in different nations. These surveys focused on several key decisions, concerned with both educational and administrative activities that could conceivably be made at the school or the school board level. They then determined whether these decisions were indeed made at a local level or at higher levels of governance.[1] For instance, the PISA 2012 survey asked school administrators to report whether the teachers, the school principal, the school's governing board, regional/state education authorities, or the national/federal education authority had substantial responsibility for 12 key tasks, such as determining school budgets, establishing curriculum, and teacher hiring (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013).

A third source of data we analyzed was the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) survey, administered by the New Teacher Center (NTC). The NTC is a leading national nonprofit organization focused on developing and implementing school improvement programs. TELL is a statewide, online, validated survey of school-based educators that assesses conditions in schools throughout an education system and provides school-level information on educator perceptions of conditions in their schools. TELL does not utilize random samples, but it is an unusually large survey with data compiled from almost 1.3 million teachers and principals, in over 30 000 schools, in 23 states, from 2008 to 2014. TELL collects information from a large proportion of teachers per school—usually 85% or more—providing accurate school-level data. TELL is longitudinal for some states, allowing analysis of school-level changes over time, and finally, TELL supports both cross-state and within-state analyses of schools (for more information on TELL, see New Teacher Center, 2013).

Like SASS, TELL collects data on an unusually wide range of measures of school and teaching conditions. TELL has 168 questionnaire items that capture information on 9 key areas of the teaching and learning conditions of schools including: allocation of time; facilities and resources; professional development; school leadership; teacher leadership; instructional practices and support; managing student conduct; community support and involvement; and new teacher support. Unlike SASS, the TELL survey also collects data on multiple measures of student academic achievement and growth.

For this chapter, we drew from our analysis of the TELL data on the role that faculty have in eight key areas of decision making in their school, concerned with

both educational and administrative activities. We examined both the levels of teacher control over decision making, and the relationship between the measures of teacher control and student achievement for both math and English language arts. Our TELL analysis sample comprised 880 500 teachers, in 24 645 public schools, in 16 states. These data were collected during the 2011–2015 school years.

In the debate over accountability and control, confusion arises because different analysts use different definitions for the same phenomena, or use similar definitions for different phenomena. Hence, it is necessary to clarify our usage of key concepts and terms. The hierarchical distribution of power lies at the crux of the above-discussed larger debates concerning school accountability and is the focus of this chapter. Among researchers and commentators, power and related concepts—control, autonomy, influence—have been defined in a variety of ways. Drawing from an organizational sociology perspective, power as we define it here is synonymous with control; it is a relationship wherein an individual or group influences or controls particular issues or decisions.[2]

In this chapter, we examine several levels of decision making and look at the control over teachers' work held at these different levels. But the primary focus is the control held by teachers themselves over the terms and content of their work, both individually and collectively, both school wide and within classrooms, and for both academic and non-academic issues. In this chapter, *school centralization* or *decentralization* refer to the relative levels of power and influence of two groups—teachers and administrators—*within* schools. Hence, when we refer to a decentralized school we mean one in which there is a great deal of teacher control— where teachers hold a lot of control over their work relative to school administrators. A centralized school, conversely, is one in which there is a great deal of organizational control—where school and district administrators hold a lot of control over teachers' work relative to teachers themselves.

Results

Who Controls Teachers' Work?

In contrast with most European nations, public schooling in the United States originally began on a highly democratized, localized basis. The resulting legacy is a current system of some 13 500 individual public school districts, governed by local school boards of citizens, each with legal responsibility for the administration and operation of publicly funded, universal, mandatory elementary and secondary schooling (Tyack, 1974). Local school districts in the United States are clearly no longer the autonomous bodies they once were. Over the past half century, myriad other organizational actors have increasingly exerted, or sought to influence, control of schooling, including state governments, external pressure groups, the judicial system, and the federal government (Kirst, 1984). Beginning in 2002, there was an unprecedented expansion of the federal role in education through the No Child Left Behind Act. Nevertheless, comparative data from the OECD surveys indicate that, despite these changes, schooling in the United States still remains a far more nonfederal and local affair than in most other countries.

The OECD data show that, since the early 1990s, numerous nations have decentralized their educational decision making from federal to local levels. In contrast, for the United States the data show a growth of control exercised at the federal level and especially the state level. Despite this, an unusually small proportion of important educational decisions are still made at the federal level in the United States, and an unusually large proportion are made at the school or local school board levels. As illustrated in Figure 7.2, of the decisions included in the 2012 survey, in the United States. only 2% were made at the federal level, while 70% were made at the local level or below. These data do not mean schools are entirely autonomous, as rarely does the school have sole authority for decisions. However, at a systemic level, the international data do indicate that control of schooling in the United States remains relatively decentralized.

When we focus on the distribution of power within schools themselves, a different picture emerges. While the education system in the United States is relatively decentralized, schools themselves are not. As shown in Figure 7.2, US teachers are less likely to have influence over key decisions, both relative to teachers in many other nations and relative to their schools' principals. In other words, the OECD data show that while many key decisions in the United States are made locally, these are controlled far more often by school administrators than by teachers.

The degree of power and control practitioners hold over decisions in their workplaces is one of the most important criteria used by sociologists of organizations, occupations, and work to distinguish the degree of professionalization

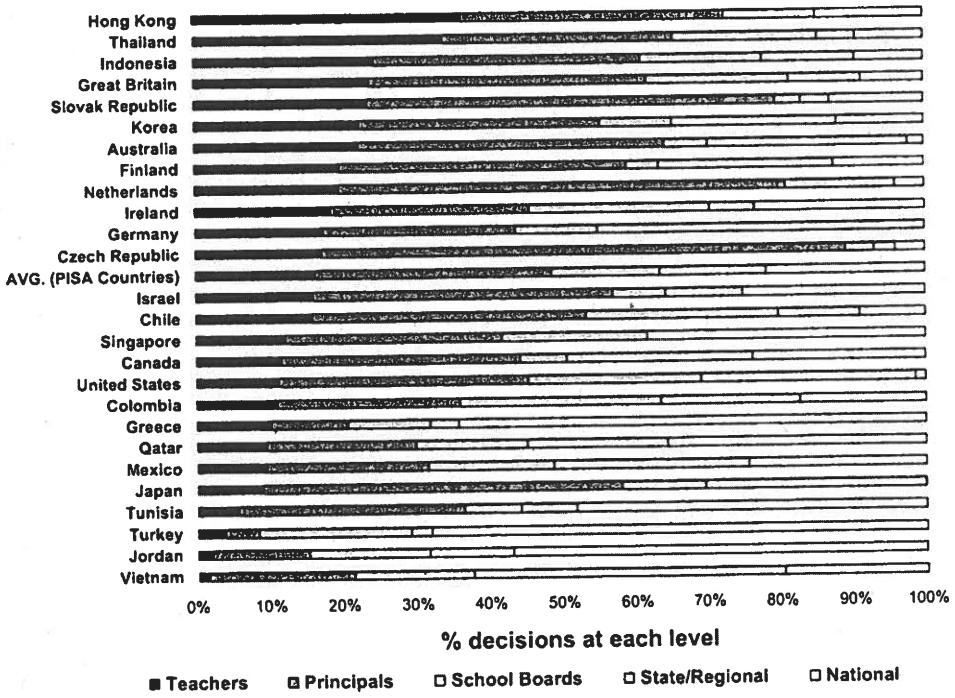

Figure 7.2 International differences in the control of schools: Percentage of key decisions made at different levels of educational systems, 2012. *Data source:* OECD (2012): Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

in a particular line of work (Freidson, 1986; Hodson & Sullivan, 1995). Professionalized employees usually have control and autonomy approaching that of senior management when it comes to organizational decisions surrounding their work. University professors, for example, often have equal or greater control than that of university administrators over the content of their teaching and research, over the hiring of new colleagues, over the evaluation and promotion of members through peer review, and, hence, over the ongoing content and character of their profession. Members of lower-status occupations usually have less say over their work.

This portrait from the OECD data of a high degree of centralization within schools across the United States is further supported by our analyses of the SASS data. Our research has documented that, in comparison with traditional professions, and relative to school administrators, teachers on average have only limited power and control over key decisions concerning the day-to-day management of their work and their workplaces (Ingersoll, 2003). This is illustrated in Figures 7.3 and 7.4, which present US national data for two points in time (1993–1994 and 2011–2012) of the relative influence of secondary school teachers and administrators, as reported by school administrators (the earlier SASS surveys included items on the influence of school boards and districts; in 2011–2012 such data were not collected). As Figures 7.3 and 7.4 illustrate, at the top of the hierarchy within schools, for most of the school decisions examined, lie principals. At the bottom of the hierarchy, for most of the decisions, lie teachers.[3]

A key example of the imbalance of control between teachers and administrators is the area of teacher hiring and evaluation. The hiring and evaluation of colleagues is an area for which professionals traditionally have a great deal of control. University professors, for example, typically have equal or more

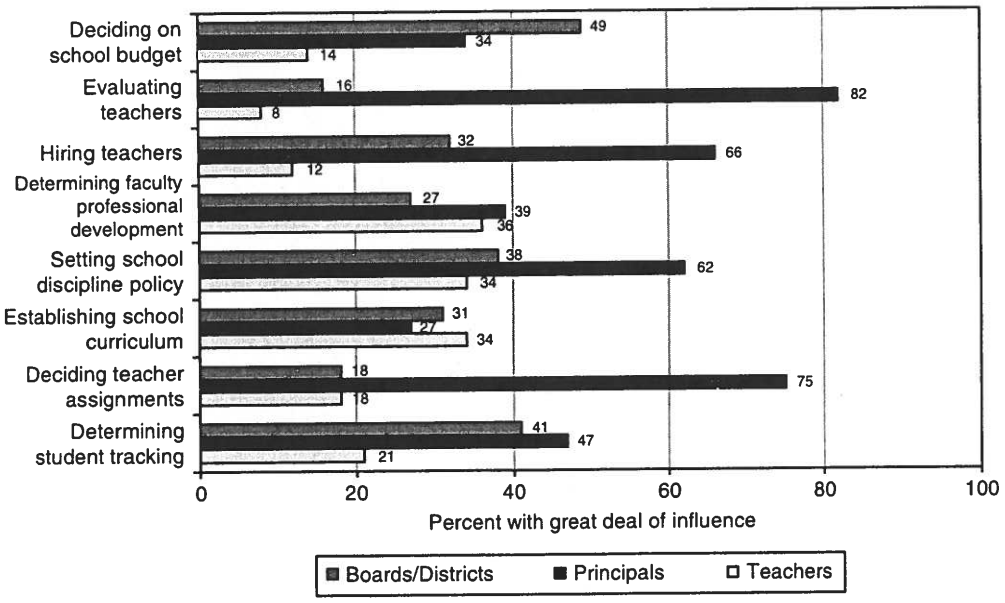

Figure 7.3 The relative influence of school boards, principals and teachers over key school decisions, 1993–1994.

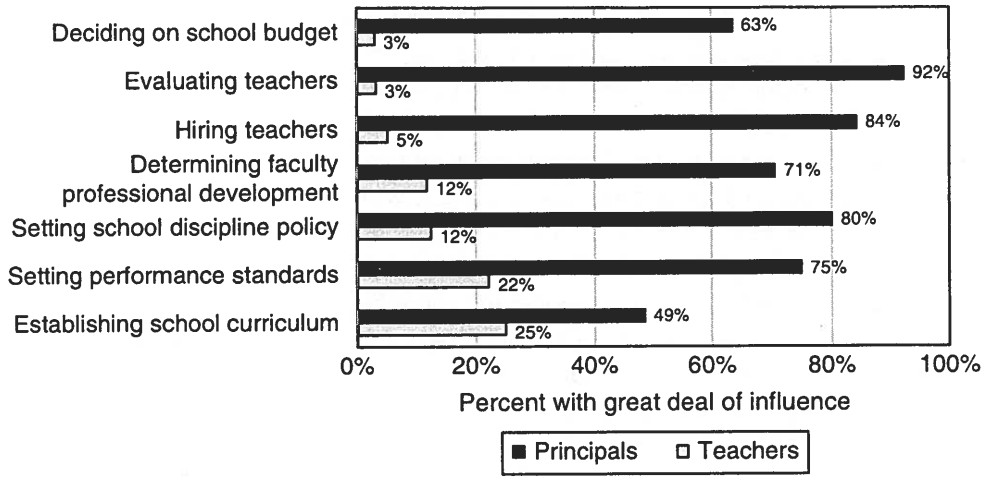

Figure 7.4 The relative influence of school boards, principals and teachers over key school decisions, 2011–2012. *Data source:* 2011–2012 Schools and Staffing Survey.

influence, relative to university administrators, over hiring and promotion decisions.[4] This does not hold for school teachers in the United States

Moreover, as illustrated in Figure 7.3, principals also have the prerogative to decide teachers' course assignments, directing the subjects, courses and grade levels they will teach. This issue lies at the heart of the professional status of any occupational group. It is a crucial issue for teachers because it reveals the extent to which teachers lack control over the content of their jobs and also because of its implications for their degree of expertise. Our research has documented that out-of-field teaching—teachers assigned to teach subjects which do not match their fields of preparation—is widespread in the United States (Ingersoll, 1999, 2004). This misassignment, which may be responsible for some of the negative perceptions of teacher quality, lies largely out of teacher control.

A similar account holds for teachers' influence over important decisions regarding the clients they serve—students. In the case of determining the school's discipline policy, a crucial part of student socialization, principals are more frequently reported having substantial control than teachers. Likewise, as shown in Figure 7.3, teachers often had little say over what kind of student ability grouping the school has and which students are placed into which tracks or ability levels. Our fieldwork (Ingersoll, 2003) further revealed that teachers typically had little say over decisions surrounding whether to promote particular students or require them to repeat a grade. Likewise, teachers had little influence over the assignment of students to their courses. In addition, rarely did teachers have the power to remove disruptive students from their classrooms, even temporarily. Teachers also usually had almost no influence over the rules surrounding student expulsion from schools. In other words, teachers rarely have the right not to teach particular students, even if they are disruptive and do not wish to be in school. As described by Lortie (1975), the relationship between teacher and student continues to be one of "dual captivity": teachers are public servants who cannot choose not to serve their clients and their clients are recipients of a public service who cannot choose not to be served. This stands in sharp distinction to

Our interpretation of these data on teachers' out-of-pocket expenditures is that they illustrate a remarkable level of responsibility, commitment, and a kind of personal accountability, on the part of individuals, even though the organizations that employ these individuals offer them little influence and voice into the larger decisions that shape their jobs. The data suggest that, in the year 2012 alone, the workforce of 4 million teachers donated over $1.5 billion of educational materials to schools.

Teacher financial subsidization of public schools is especially notable because teaching is a relatively low-paying occupation in the United States. SASS data indicate that the average maximum salary possible at the end of one's career was only $65,100 in 2011–2012. Comparing salaries of college graduates within the United States, the average salary (one year after graduation) for college graduates who become teachers is almost 50% less than the average starting salary of classmates who take computer science jobs (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011). Moreover, this disparity remains throughout the career span. Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) show that the average annual earnings of teachers in that year were less than one-third of the average annual salaries of surgeons, less than one-half those of lawyers, and about two-thirds those of college and university professors in the arts and sciences (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2011).

In sum, our argument is that the occupation of teaching is characterized by an imbalance between responsibilities and power. It is widely recognized that the work of teachers—helping prepare, instruct, and rear the next generation of children—is important and consequential. However, those who are entrusted with the training of this next generation—teachers—are not given with much control over many key decisions central to this crucial work. Interestingly, and in contrast to many nations, the education system in the United States is relatively decentralized, with a relatively large share of the decisions surrounding this important work of teachers made at the level of local school districts and schools. However, also in contrast to many other nations, schools themselves are relatively centralized; that is, a relatively small share of the key decisions surrounding the work of teachers is made by teachers themselves. Nevertheless, while teachers are allowed only limited input into these crucial decisions, teachers are delegated a large degree of responsibility for the implementation and success of these decisions. And teachers appear to have accepted this high degree of responsibility—as evidenced by their high frequency of spending their own money on the needs of the nations' students. Furthermore, this imbalance between responsibilities and power may be increasing. By definition, the objective of the teacher-accountability movement has been to hold teachers increasingly responsible for the learning and growth of students. Along with this increased responsibility, however, the trend data shown in Figures 7.3 and 7.4 suggest that, there has been a decrease in teachers' control over their work and their schools.

What Difference Does Teacher Control Make?

What difference does the amount of teacher control over their work make for how well schools function? In particular, is there any relationship between the

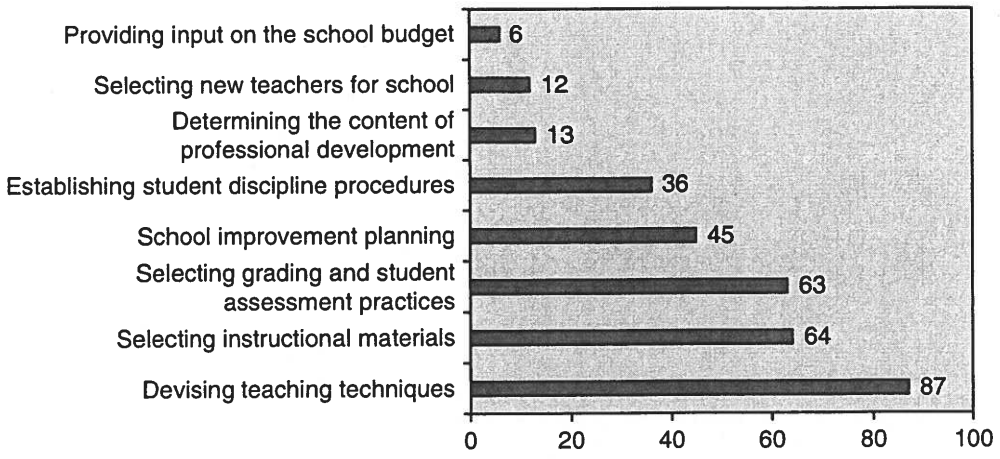

Figure 7.6 Percent of school faculties reporting teachers having a substantial role in key decisions in their school. *Data source:* TELL Survey.

amount of teacher influence in decision making in a school and the student academic achievement in that school?

We analyzed the TELL data to answer these questions. Our analysis focused on a battery of survey questions that asked teachers to report on the role teachers have in eight key areas of decision making in their school. Figure 7.6 displays the percentage of school faculties that on average reported teachers had a substantial role in each of the eight decision making areas (Ingersoll, Sirinides, & Dougherty, 2017).[7]

The data in Figure 7.6 show large variations in two ways. First, there was a wide range across the decision areas—from almost 90% of school faculties reporting teachers have a substantial role in devising teaching techniques to less than 10% reporting teachers have a substantial role in providing input on how the school budget will be spent. Second, the data also reveal a wide range across schools. For instance, in 45% of the schools the faculty reported that teachers have a substantial role in school improvement planning, while 55% of school faculties reported that teachers had little or no role at all.

We then examined the relationship between these measures of school-level teacher control and school-level student achievement, for both math and English language arts (ELA). Our achievement measure was the within-state percentile ranking of a school's student proficiency levels. To evaluate these relationships we undertook a series of multiple regression analyses of the TELL data. We examined the relationship between math and ELA proficiency rankings and each of the eight measures separately, and also between the rankings and an overall composite measure that represented an average of teacher control across all eight areas. In these regression analyses we controlled for the effects of several key school characteristics: school level; school size; student poverty levels; percentage of minority students; and the proportion of teachers who were beginners.

The regression analyses showed that each of the eight separate measures of teacher control was related to student achievement, at a statistically significant

level. In other words, other school characteristics being equal, schools with higher levels of teacher control in each of the eight areas also had significantly higher student achievement.

To illustrate these associations between achievement and teacher control we estimated predicted percentile rankings of proficiency by entering a range of values for the measure of teacher control, while holding the measures of school characteristics constant at the sample mean. We set the teacher control measure to values corresponding to the 10th percentile, the 25th percentile, the mean, the 75th percentile, and the 90th percentile for the sample. This allowed us to predict student proficiency for a range of hypothetical schools, beginning with those that have the lowest level of teacher control (i.e., at the 10th percentile on the composite measure) and concluding with those that have the highest level of teach control (i.e., at the 90th percentile on the composite measure). Figure 7.7 illustrates these predicted percentile rankings for both math and ELA, for the different levels of control, using our composite measure of overall control across the eight areas.

The data in Figure 7.7 reveal a clear collective relationship between the degree of teacher control in a school and a school's levels of student proficiency. For example, holding constant school background characteristics (at average levels of poverty, size, etc.), a school with the highest level of overall teacher control is on average ranked at the 56th percentile in both math proficiency and ELA proficiency in their state. In contrast, a school with the lowest level of teacher control is on average ranked at the 45th percentile in both math proficiency and ELA proficiency. These differences are at a statistically significant level. It is also important to recognize that these analyses do not document causality; the data do not verify that increases in teacher control cause increases in student achievement. The data simply indicate that in our large sample of schools, those with higher levels of teacher control also have significantly higher student achievement.

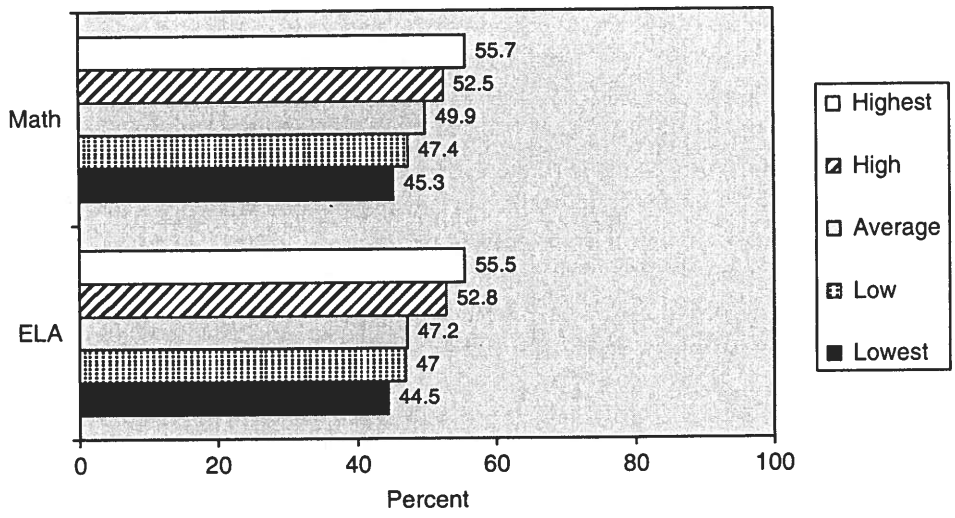

Figure 7.7 Predicted percentile ranking of school's student proficiency, by levels of teacher control, after controlling for school characteristics. *Data source:* TELL Survey.

Our regression analyses also revealed significant differences in the strength of the relationship between student achievement and each of the eight separate decision-making areas. Two decision areas had the strongest relationship with student achievement: establishing student discipline procedures and school improvement planning. The data indicate that schools where teachers have a substantial role in each of these two decision areas have significantly higher student achievement, but the data (see Figure 7.6) also indicate that in the majority of schools teachers have little or no role in these two areas. Hence, the data suggest an imbalance: that teachers are often allowed little input into some of the more consequential decisions in their schools. These findings also suggest that there is an important role for leadership, management, and organizational conditions in these schools—a point we return to in our chapter conclusion.

The importance of balance between teachers' responsibilities and power was borne out in a separate study we conducted using SASS/TFS data, on the impact of accountability reforms on teacher retention (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2016). Our primary focus was on school-level accountability reforms and not individual teacher accountability mechanisms. We examined whether each of the typical steps (see Figure 7.1) involved in school accountability—the setting of standards for school performance, the use of state or district assessments to measure performance, how well the school performed in regard to the standards, and the application of any subsequent incentives or sanctions at the school level—had an association with the subsequent turnover of teachers from those schools.

Our advanced multilevel regression analyses of the SASS/TFS data showed that, after controlling for the background characteristics of teachers and schools, some steps in school accountability reforms had an association with teacher turnover and some did not. Having standards and assessments in schools themselves did not have an association with teacher retention. In contrast, school performance did matter: lower-performing schools had far higher turnover than higher-performing schools. Rewards given to higher-performing schools did little to improve the already higher retention, but sanctions applied to lower-performing schools were related to increases in their already higher turnover.

Though sanctions are associated with increased turnover, our analyses revealed that teacher attrition is not inevitable at sanctioned lower-performing schools. Following our sociology of organizations, occupations, and work perspectives, we examined the role of school organizational conditions in the relationship between school accountability and teacher turnover, since state-mandated accountability policies do not necessarily mandate specific corrective methods (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004; Smith & O'Day, 1990). We analyzed the interaction of accountability reforms and a selection of working and organizational conditions long associated with the effectiveness of schools—the quality of school leadership, the amount of classroom resources and support provided to teachers, the level of school-wide faculty influence over decision making, and the degree of autonomy teachers have in their classrooms—in the context of teacher turnover. Indeed, positive conditions do ameliorate the effects of sanctions in low-performing schools. In particular, one variable stood out—how much autonomy teachers were allowed in their own classrooms over key issues such as selecting textbooks and other instructional materials, selecting content, topics and skills

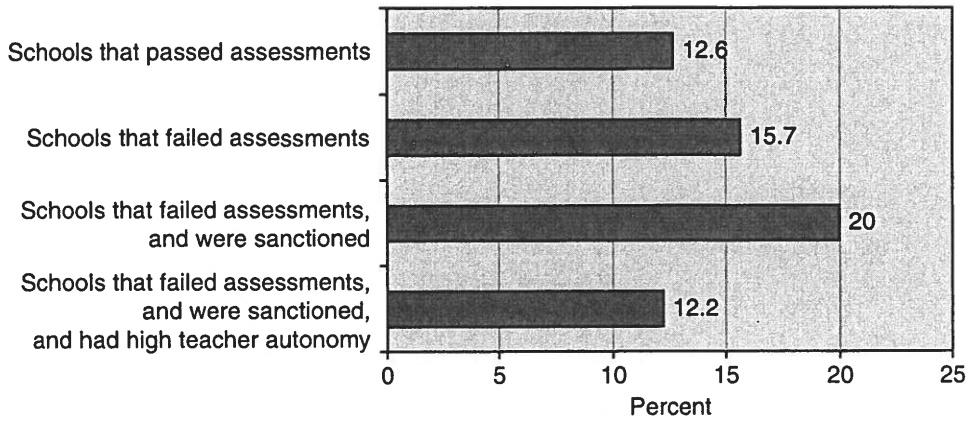

Figure 7.8 Predicted probabilities of teacher turnover, by school performance, sanctions and level of teacher autonomy, 2004—2005. *Source:* Ingersoll, Merrill, & May (in press).

to be taught, selecting teaching techniques, evaluating and grading students, determining the amount of homework to be assigned and disciplining students. The data showed that low-performing schools with sanctions had far lower turnover if their teachers were allowed more autonomy in their own classrooms.

Figure 7.8 illustrates the differences we found in the probability of teacher turnover, according to school performance, sanctions, and teacher autonomy. On average, 12.6% of the teachers in the higher-performing schools departed between the 2004 and 2005 school years. Turnover was significantly higher—20%—in those lower-performing schools that had been subsequently sanctioned. However, those lower-performing sanctioned schools which allowed teachers greater classroom autonomy had significantly lower turnover—and at a rate (12.2%) similar to that in higher-performing schools.[8] These findings also suggest that there is an important role for the leadership, management, and organizational conditions in these schools.

Conclusion

The importance of teacher accountability has become a growing part of the conventional wisdom about what ails teaching, and has had an increasing impact on reform and policy. Our view is that proponents of the accountability reforms identify important issues and problems. Accountability in schools is reasonable and necessary, and the public has a right and, indeed, an obligation to be concerned with the performance of teachers.

Our argument, however, is that the teacher-accountability perspective offers only a partial, one-sided explanation. As a result, it often overlooks the ways schools themselves, in particular how they are managed, contribute to the teacher quality problem. The data show that a high degree of centralization in schools and a lack of teacher control, rather than the opposite, is often the source of problems in low-functioning schools. As a result, top-down accountability reforms may divert attention from the organizational sources of school problems.

Additionally, proponents of top-down accountability reforms often overlook the unusual character of the teaching workforce. Common among these analysts and reformers is a teacher-deficit viewpoint, assuming that blame lies with the caliber of individual teachers. But the data suggest that teachers have an unusual degree of public service orientation and commitment, compared with many other occupations. Unrecognized and unappreciated by these critics is the extent to which the teaching workforce is a source of human, social, and even financial capital in schools.

Finally, for the preceding reasons teacher-accountability reforms often do not work well. Top-down reforms draw attention to an important set of needs—accountability on the part of those doing the work. But these kinds of reforms sometimes overlook another equally important set of needs—the autonomy and engagement of those doing the work. Too much organizational control may deny teachers the very control and flexibility they need to do the job effectively and undermine the motivation of those doing the job. A high degree of centralized control may squander a valuable human resource—the unusual degree of commitment of those who enter the teaching occupation. Having little control over the terms, processes, and outcomes of their work may undermine the ability of teachers to feel they are doing worthwhile work, the very reason many of them came into the occupation in the first place, and thus end up contributing to the high rates of turnover among teachers. As a result, such centralizing reforms may not only fail to solve the problems they seek to address but also end up making things worse. In plain terms, simply recruiting quality candidates and holding them more accountable will not solve the problem of quality if the manner in which the job itself is organized and managed undermines those same candidates.

A prominent line of thought in the sociology of organizations, occupations and work and in the practical realm of organizational leadership (Drucker, 1973, 1992; Whyte & Blasi, 1982) advocates a balanced approach to implementing accountability in work settings. In this view, organizational accountability and employee control must go hand in hand in workplaces, and increases in one must be accompanied by increases in the other: imbalances between the two can result in problems for both employees and organizations. Delegating autonomy or control to employees without also ensuring commensurate accountability can foster inefficiencies and irresponsible behavior and lead to low performance. Likewise, administering organizational accountability without providing commensurate autonomy to employees can foster job dissatisfaction, increase employee turnover, and lead to low performance.

Translating this management perspective for the case of schools suggests that it does not make sense to hold teachers accountable for issues they do not control, nor to give teachers control over issues for which they are not held accountable. Both of these changes are necessary, and neither alone is sufficient. One implication for school managers and leaders is to understand the degree of balance or imbalance in schools. For instance, the TELL data have been widely used as a diagnostic tool to assess school educators' views of the conditions in their schools. The results of these TELL diagnoses could then be used by school educators and leaders to evaluate whether particular schools are weak in, or

sufficiently focusing on, those aspects of teaching conditions in schools that are most tied to improving student achievement.

From a sociology of organizations, occupations, and work perspective, this balanced approach is a key characteristic underlying the model of the established professions—law, medicine, university professors, and engineering, in particular (Freidson 1986; Hodson & Sullivan, 1995). Professional work involves highly complex sets of skills, intellectual functioning, and knowledge that are neither easily acquired nor widely held. For this reason, professions are often referred to as "knowledge-based" occupations. In the professional model, practitioners are, ideally, first provided with the training, resources, conditions, and autonomy to do the job, and then held accountable for doing the job well.

Promising examples of a more balanced and professional-like model of school organization have sprung up in recent years in the United States. For example, there is a growing network of schools that are operated and run by teachers (Kolderie, 2008, 2014). These schools are often referred to as "partnership schools" because they are modeled after law partnerships, where lawyers both manage, and ultimately are accountable for, the organization and its success (Hawkins, 2009).

From our sociology of organizations, occupations, and work perspective, solving the problem of teacher quality will require addressing the underlying roots of the problem. In contrast to a teacher-deficit perspective, the focus of reform should shift from solely attracting or developing "better people for the job" to also securing "a better job for the people" (Kolderie, 2008). Rather than forcing the existing arrangement to work better, this alternative perspective suggests the importance of also viewing teacher quality issues as organizational and occupational design issues, implying the need for a different arrangement, better built for those who do the work of teaching.

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Notes

1 The International Survey of the Locus of Decision-Making in Educational Systems was part of the INES of the Center for Educational Research and Innovation of the OECD in 1990–1991 and 1997–1998. Later a similar version of this survey was incorporated into PISA. The data in Figure 7.2 were collected from public elementary and secondary schools by PISA in 2012 with principals assessing responsibility for tasks such as hiring teachers and determining course content.

In Figure 7.2, the estimates refer to the percentages of principal/respondents that reported a group or level had considerable responsibility, adjusted if respondents reported more than one group/level had responsibility. For example, if a principal reported that they were the only group/level with considerable responsibility, we allocated 1.0 to them for that question, but if they reported they, the school board, and teachers all had considerable responsibility, we allocated 0.33 to each, and so on. We then summed the points per group and divided by the total for each nation to calculate each group/level's percentage.

For further information on the 1990–1991 survey, see OECD (1995). For details on the 1997–1998 survey, see OECD (1998). For further information on the 2012 PISA survey, see OECD (2013).

2 See, for example, Burawoy (1979); Edwards (1979); Frey (1971); Lukes (1974); and Perrow (1986).

3 The data in Figure 7.3 on discipline, hiring and curriculum, the budget, teacher evaluation, and inservice are from the school administrator questionnaire of the 1993–1994 SASS. The sample size was 4031 secondary schools. In SASS, principals at each school were asked to rate the influence of school boards, school district staff, principals, and teachers at their school on several activities. We counted school district staff with school boards. The questions used a six-point scale from 1 = "none" to 6 = "a great deal." In Figure 7.3, we defined the groups as having a "great deal of influence" if their score was 6 on the scale.

The data on teacher assignment and student tracking in Figure 7.3 are from the 1993 NCES Survey of High School Curricular Options (SHSCO). This survey was a supplement based on a public school subset of SASS. Like the SASS administrator questionnaire, the SHSCO also asked principals about the influence of different groups on several school decisions, but the questionnaires differed slightly in wording and scale. The SHSCO questions used a four-point scale from "not at all" to "a great extent." In Figure 7.3, we defined the groups as having a "great deal of influence" if their score was 4 on the scale. The sample size was 912 public secondary schools. For the item on student tracking, the groups evaluated were school governing boards, school principals and teacher department heads (not teachers). For the item on teacher assignment, the groups evaluated were school district administrators, school principals and teachers. Because these data were not collected for private schools and also not available for disaggregation, they are not included in the estimates.

The data in Figure 7.4 are from the school administrator and the teacher questionnaires of the 2011–2012 SASS. The sample size was 11 000 secondary schools. In the 2011–2012 SASS, principals and teachers at each school were asked to assess their own influence on various aspects of school policy, such as establishing curriculum and setting discipline policy. The questions used a four-point scale from 1 = "none" to 4 = "a great deal." In Figure 7.4, we defined the groups as having a "great deal of influence" if their score was 4 on the scale.

4 For discussion of the case of higher education, see, for example, Clark (1987); Grant & Murray (1999); Krause (1971); or Mills (1951).

5 The apparent changes over time in the percentage of empowered faculties must be interpreted with caution. Across the SASS surveys, those asked about the distribution of power changed. In the earlier SASS surveys, principals were the

respondents reporting on both their influence and that of faculties in their schools. However, in 2012, principals only reported on their own level of influence, while teachers were asked to report on the influence of faculties in their schools. Hence, it is unclear if the apparent decreases in faculty empowerment are real, or are a result of a change in respondents.

6 The data in Figure 7.5 are from the 2011–2012 SASS.

7 The data analyzed for Figures 7.6 and 7.7 are from a battery of survey questions that asked teachers about the role taken by faculty in eight key areas of decision making in their school, concerned with both educational and administrative activities. The questions asked teachers to "indicate the role that teachers have at your school in each area." The answer scale was: "no role at all; small role; moderate role; large role." We aggregated individual teacher responses to school-level measures and interpreted average scores of a moderate to large role as indicating a substantial level of teacher control over the decision area. The data in Figure 7.6 represent the percentage of school faculties that on average reported teachers had either a large or a moderate role in each of the eight decision making areas.

The data in Figure 7.7 illustrate the relationship between the measures of teacher control and student achievement. Our measure of student achievement was based on the proportion of a school's students that scored at a proficient level on state-wide exams, for both math and English language arts. Because states often utilized different exams, and defined proficiency at differing levels, it was necessary to standardize the measures of student proficiency. We did this by converting each school's student proficiency percentage to a within-state ranking in student proficiency levels, for both subjects. Thus, our outcome became how a school's students ranked in math and ELA proficiency in their state. Our analysis was conducted on aggregate school-level measures: average reported levels of teachers' control and school-level student proficiency rankings. For further information, see Ingersoll et al. (2017).

8 The data analyzed for Figure 7.8 are for public schools and from the 2003–2004 SASS and 2004–2005 TFS. In the middle of the 2003–2004 school year, SASS asked a national sample of school-level administrators if, in the prior school year (2002–2003), their school had been subject to school performance standards established by their district or state, whether their school had been subject to evaluations assessing their performance in regard to the standards, and how their school fared on the assessments. These administrators were then asked whether their school subsequently, in the current 2003–2004 school year, received rewards, incentives, penalties or sanctions as a result of the school's performance. Subsequently, the TFS obtained data on which teachers, from the original 2003–2004 SASS teacher sample, stayed in, or departed from, their schools, or from teaching altogether, by the following year – 2004–2005. Hence, the 2003–2005 SASS/TFS provides a clear timeline of the steps in accountability (see Figure 7.1): standards set for schools and their performance assessed in 2002–2003; rewards or sanctions subsequently applied to schools in 2003–2004; teacher retention or turnover between 2003–2004 and 2004–2005.

In our analysis we used logistic regression to examine the relationship between each of the steps of school accountability and the likelihood that individual teachers depart from their schools, while controlling for individual-level characteristics of teachers and school demographic characteristics. In the regression models, the dependent variable—teacher turnover—was based on whether each teacher remained with his/her school ("stayers"), or departed from his/her school in the year subsequent to the administration of the accountability steps. The latter outcome includes both those who left teaching altogether ("leavers") and those who moved between schools ("movers"). For more detail on the data and methods utilized in the analyses, see Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2016, in press).

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