Martin Forsey, Challenging the System: A Dramatic Tale of Neoliberal Reform in an Australian High School

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Main content

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In this book, Martin Forsey has contributed an ethnographically-based study of reform in an Australian secondary school. The book is of historical interest. It describes events that occurred nearly a decade before the date of publication; but more importantly, it analyses a significant historical phenomenon that began in the late 1970s and continues through to the present day.

There was a period from the 1950s to the early 1970s when governments attempted not only to universalise the experience of secondary schooling, but invent new institutions in order to provide a fair standard of education to all Australian youth. Sometimes the enterprise was discussed in terms of investing in the nation's human capital, at other times the language was of access, equality and equity; and sometimes both. This book looks at the following, less inclusive era.

Forsey studies one school in Western Australia in the late 1990s caught up in the struggles between schools and education departments to interpret the calls to devolution and decentralisation. These policy developments belonged to the cluster of initiatives and discourses associated with neoliberalism. Greater autonomy for schools in the developing quasi-markets of neoliberalism was not unconditional however. Through its education...

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Start by marking “Challenging the System? a Dramatic Tale of Neoliberal Reform in an Australian High School (Hc)” as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read. Based on extended, intensive fieldwork in an Australian high school, Challenging the System
illuminates issues faced on a daily basis by teachers and educational administrators in many parts of the world. Forsey highlights the tensions arising between neo-liberal emphasis on individual school communities as the engine for competitive excellence in education, and the need for extended, intensive fieldwork in an Australian high school, Challenging the System illuminates issues faced on a daily basis by teachers and educational administrators in many parts of the world. Martin Forsey is an educational sociologist/anthropologist with particular interests in the social and cultural effects of schooling and the internationalisation of tertiary education. He has also published several articles on qualitative research methodology. His book, Challenging the System? A Dramatic Tale of Neoliberal Reform in an Australian High School, was published in 2007 to strong acclaim, while a number of papers have been drawing significant attention across the range of his research interests. Martin is a member of the editorial board of three international research journals, he also serves on the Board of Advisors for the Centre for Anthropological Research on Childhood, Youth and Education, at Brunel University. Neoliberalism or neo-liberalism is the 20th-century resurgence of 19th-century ideas associated with economic liberalism and free-market capitalism. It is generally associated with policies of economic liberalization, including privatization, deregulation, globalization, free trade, austerity, and reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society; however, the defining features of neoliberalism in both thought and practice have been the