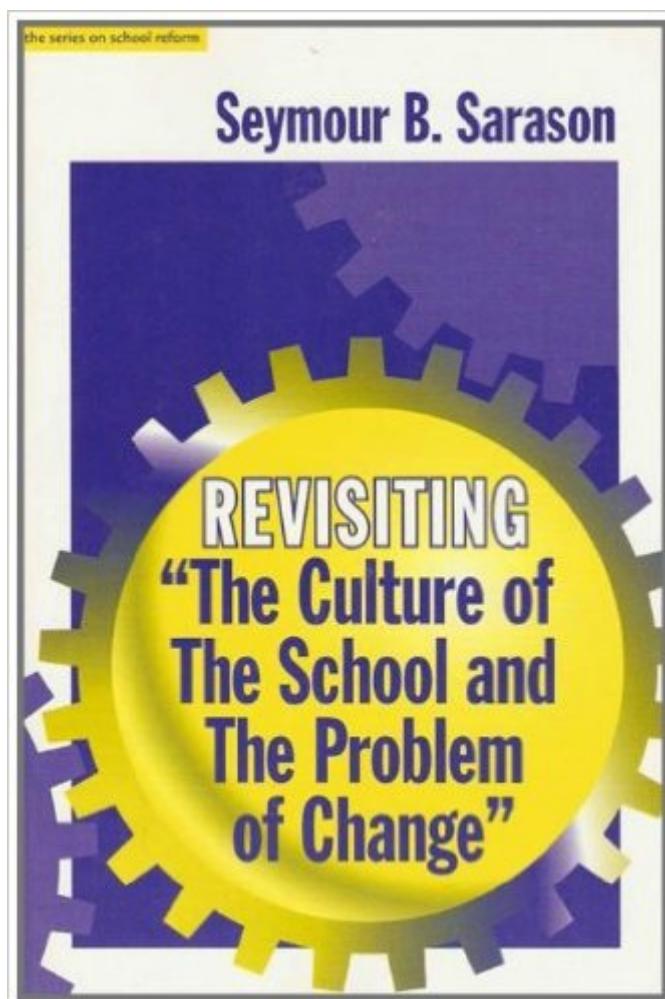


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Revisiting "the Culture Of The School And The Problem Of Change" (The Series On School Reform) (Sociology Of Education Series)



Synopsis

This title, published 25 years after the original, features the author with his own reflections on the same issues in the face of today's crisis in public schools. Dr Sarason also takes a close look at government involvement in change efforts in schooling.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reviewer: Phil H. Gropp from Omaha, NEDr. Seymour Sarason's book is divided into two main sections/parts. In the first section, he reproduces and elaborates on the second edition of his 1971 book, "The Culture of The School and The Problem of Change." The main thesis of the section was that of defining the organization and culture of a school and the attachments the school personnel have to their ways of working in that environment. His main argument was that both of these complex realities must be changed if real improvement is to take place. In the chapters of section one, Sarason expounds on three major themes/concepts: that school cultures are complicated, that principals and teachers are isolated in their position, and that teachers responsible for student achievement often have little time to learn new educational ideas. In concluding section one, Dr. Sarason stresses that changing a school culture is difficult work and must be done in a comprehensive way if it is to be effective and of lasting significance. In the second section, Sarason "REVISITS" his original thoughts and philosophy of changing school culture. He elevates his concerns of trying to maintain and improve public education as we have known it. Sarason states that "what happens in our cities and our schools will determine the fate of our society." The first of

the two main points he "revisits" is that for the process of change to take place today, you must completely understand a school's culture especially its people, values, and practices. Secondly, for increased achievement to be envisioned, teachers must relinquish their total control over students and allow them to take more responsibility for (at least most of) their own learning.

When Sarson first published his work 25 years ago, he was, without a doubt, far ahead of his time in his thinking about schools, teachers, principals, and the ability of the students to learn. He questioned the problems associated with the whole educational environment, and suggested such "outlandish" ideas such as de-emphasizing the teaching of reading and arithmetic in the early grades and eliminating the role of the school principal and the boards of education as they were then known (13). He judged the new math as being pretty dull and ineffectual. He relished giving teachers more control over their classroom environments. To emphasize his points, he referred to his man from outer space who frequently observed schools from a purely non-partisan role. For example, this spaceman would puzzlingly see schools filled five days a week, observe virtual bustling communities of activity, only to close down two days a week. He would then ponder better school scheduling and community involvement. Sarason took on the great educators of the time-names like Conant and Dewey, Koerner and Rickover, and offered sound proposals for the changing world that was profoundly influencing the school culture. But in his REVISITING section of the book, he offers his opinions on a gammed of subjects, including school organizations, teachers, students, vouchers, and social change, to name a few. One of his most fascinating points is that of reiterating the idea that schools need to create and maintain environments that are continually providing productive learning for students that allows "knowing" to become internalized. This book is a fascinating look at the past, as well as a glimpse at the present and future of education in the United States.

Reviewer: Phil H. Gropp from Omaha, NE
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