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Migrant Teachers

Lora Bartlett



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Migrant Teachers investigates an overlooked trend in U.S. public schools today: the growing reliance on teachers trained overseas, as federal mandates require K-12 schools to employ qualified teachers or risk funding cuts. A narrowly technocratic view of teachers as subject specialists has led districts to look abroad, Lora Bartlett asserts, resulting in transient teaching professionals with little opportunity to connect meaningfully with students.

Highly recruited by inner-city school districts that struggle to attract educators, approximately 90,000 teachers from the Philippines, India, and other countries came to the United States between 2002 and 2008. From administrators' perspective, these instructors are excellent employees--well educated and able to teach subjects like math, science, and special education where teachers are in short supply. Despite the additional recruitment of qualified teachers, American schools are failing to reap the possible benefits of the global labor market. Bartlett shows how the framing of these recruited teachers as stopgap, low-status workers cultivates a high-turnover, low-investment workforce that undermines the conditions needed for good teaching and learning. Bartlett calls on schools to provide better support to both overseas-trained teachers and their American counterparts.

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