

# THE GOODLAD OCCASIONAL

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I cannot begin to tell you how shocked I was to be put out of commission in a fraction of a second and how disappointed I was as a consequence to be unable to meet with the group of school principals and others on Thursday, February 16. I was making wonderful progress in moving out of a life-threatening illness that had partially incapacitated me for more than a year. Now I am further incapacitated with a left arm that will take many weeks to heal and a right arm and hand that are suffering from over-use. At this point, it is difficult to dial a telephone or write my signature.

Consequently, I have decided to send you an occasional epistle, the first two or three of which will cover much of what I had planned to present on that Thursday morning. Paula McMannon, who has kept me afloat professionally far beyond the call of duty over a long period of years, will see to it that what you get does not, from a literary perspective, embarrass my colleagues in the Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative or my colleagues in the Institute for Educational Inquiry, located about a mile from the University of Washington. Wanda Brown, a co-director of the TNE program, will see to it that copies will be distributed to you.

I was looking forward to one of the educational activities I enjoy most: engaging in productive conversation with elementary and secondary school

principals. It is my understanding that plans were under way for me to meet from time to time over the next several months with principals interested in such conversation. It is my hope that you will find my ramblings to be a useful beginning point for meetings you have with your school colleagues.



I was given the opportunity to talk with you on February 16 about a concept I first addressed in my writing and speaking nearly a couple of decades ago: the simultaneous renewal of educational programs and institutions. I begin by defining some terms. We are rather careless, I think – far too careless as educators – in engaging in conversation without agreeing on definitions of key words in the conversations. Educational philosopher Donna Kerr of the University of Washington has written pointedly about the extent to which we attend meetings on special education, physical education, health education, moral education, vocational education, and more but forget to define what we mean by the word “education.” Again and again, we engage in conversation about the objectives of education as though education had some goal other than itself. Education is a process of becoming that goes on and on throughout our lives. Education can be good or bad, depending on the concepts and principles that

fashion this becoming. The moment we talk about education having the objective of preparing us for employment, we are talking about training not education.

This definition has been part of my ecology of educational belief for a long time. Recently, I was forced to re-read my little book *What Schools Are For*, published in 1979 by Phi Delta Kappa International, because the publisher asked me to write a new foreword and a new afterword. PDK will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary at a conference in October and will give a copy of the new edition to each person in attendance. I was pleased to find that I had defined education as I do above and was in the good company of philosophers such as John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, and R. S. Peters. Of course, my definition would not satisfy those many people who believe that the purpose of education is an economic, utilitarian one.

“Renewal” is part of the process of becoming. It is profoundly different in meaning from “reform,” which is a rather nasty word implying that some bad things are going on or there are some bad people who must be reformed in line with the desires of somebody else. At one time, I was director of education in the British Columbia Provincial School for Boys – a.k.a. reform school. There was constant tension among those of us on the vocational, recreational, and educational staffs regarding our built-in expectations for the boys: they were just bad and were marking time until they went on to adult prisons; they could be reformed through punishment, work, and exhortations; or they could be assisted in analyzing their present situations and prospects for the future and want to change in the process of self-renewal.

Renewal is not synonymous with change. In a school, it is a process of inquiring into the degree to which the school is on a course of taking care of its problems as they arise, introducing new ways of thinking and doing things that emerge, engaging in dialogue about actions to be taken, taking those actions, evaluating the consequences of the actions, and continuously repeating the cycle.

I am very skeptical when principals and teachers tell me that this is what they do all the time. Colleagues and I have engaged over the years in several comprehensive, carefully designed studies of schooling, of educational change, and of the education of educators. We dealt with purposefully representative samples in all of these studies and found no programs or institutions engaged in deliberate processes of DDAE: dialogue, decision making, action, and evaluation. I have worked closely with several schools over long periods of time and am well aware that renewal is not a piece of cake. I believe that copies of the chapter on renewal in my book *Romances with Schools* (2004) have been distributed to individuals likely to receive this epistle. The Englewood School in Florida and the Laboratory School at the University of California are quite different educational institutions, but essentially the same processes were used, and they produced about the same rate of renewal in the two settings. To repeat, renewal is not reform. It does not necessarily mean changing things (but it is a check on whether some things should be changed), and it is not a project with beginning and ending times.

In discussing simultaneous educational renewal, “simultaneous” is

the easiest word to define. It simply means that two or more things are going on at once, in awareness of each other and to a considerable degree harmoniously. The concept of simultaneous renewal is at the heart of the TNE initiative. It became very clear to colleagues and me engaging in the Study of the Education of Educators in the late 1980s that three different subcultures of the educational enterprise always are engaged to some degree in the education of educators, even if they do not give recognition of that fact. From 50 to about 80 percent of the undergraduate curriculum of prospective teachers is in the arts and sciences. The arts and sciences departments take on the responsibility of providing general education, and majors and minors as appropriate, in subject matters that should be to some degree deliberately pointed toward teachers' education but often are not. From a quantitative perspective at least, the departments of the arts and sciences are the major players in the teacher education enterprise whether or not they acknowledge this fact.

Some but not all of the faculty in schools and colleges of education constitute a second subculture of teacher education, providing the philosophical, psychological, sociological, etc., underpinnings of pedagogy. Although there are some mechanisms of communication between these subcultures, there has been over the years very little joint planning, and processes of simultaneous renewal are virtually missing.

Then there is the third subculture, the student teaching phase of teacher education, for which individual teachers in various schools have responsibility. If teacher education programs are to be robust, the three subcultures must be engaged in simultaneous renewal: of their own parts of the program and of the whole. Experience with the TNE initiatives across the country to date makes clear that, although this simultaneous renewal is absolutely necessary, it is not easily achieved. The goal of collaboration among these three subcultures is to create and sustain the necessary processes of renewal. The challenge is both monumental and rewarding.

And so ends Issue One of Volume One of *The Goodlad Occasional*. I have covered only part of the ground I had planned to deal with on February 16. The rest will come along to you at some indefinite time in the future.

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