

THE GOODLAD OCCASIONAL

Volume Two, Issue One

December 6, 2006

Volume Two of *The Goodlad Occasional* addresses a large slice of the continuum of the education and training of an educator for the nation's schools. Just a few years ago, Dean Patricia Wasley of the University of Washington and a team of colleagues conducted a comprehensive study of what is involved in entering and establishing a career in teaching. Developing that continuum is a major theme of the Teachers for a New Era initiative now being carried out by the University of Washington and experienced educators in surrounding school districts. The nature and sequence of this continuum are shaped by all three cultures of the tripartite partnership necessary to a robust teacher education program: departments of the arts and sciences and the college or school of education in collaboration with partner elementary and secondary schools. I shall address this continuum and the sequence necessary to its productive unfolding. This issue focuses on its intellectual grounding.

Toward an Educative Ecology of Mind

Philosophers such as John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, and R. F. Peters regarded education as having no end other than itself: a process of becoming wholly human with all the compassion, honesty, decency, courage, concern for humankind, dependability, and so on thereto appertaining. This is the grounding required of all educators.

Peters viewed "training" not "educating" as the appropriate word when we have a specific *extrinsic* objective in mind. I have no quarrel with training as well as educating as necessary in teacher preparation. I do not know why teacher educators get upset when the preparation of teachers is referred to as "teacher training." Many of the skills necessary to good teaching are acquired through intensive training. It is necessary to remember, however, that education provides the grounding – the ecology of mind that teachers depend on in making hundreds of decisions each day of teaching. This ecology of mind provides the evidence that teachers draw upon in making these decisions, for better or for worse.

When I think of developing "an educative ecology of mind," I am thinking of more than developing one's own self. Rather, I am thinking of a special kind of self – that of a teacher.

Educator and behavioral scientist Ralph Tyler was one of the wisest people I ever met and one of my mentors. Shortly before his death, he said: "The purpose of life is learning. When one ceases to learn, one ceases to live life to the fullest. . . . Teaching is a complex process that requires continuous learning. Before going to sleep, I always ask myself three things. One, what did I learn today; two, what did it mean; and three, how can I use it?" Tyler was not thinking only of his own education; in his ecology of mind

was a place for educative thinking – the education of others, such as me, who were his students.

It is primarily the teachers' ecology of mind that determines the quality of students' learning in the classroom. It is the absence of a well-developed ecology of mind that largely contributes to sterility in the classroom – the over-use of textbooks, workbooks, and a variety of artifacts for keeping the students quiet and busy. I have argued over the years that teachers should hone at least a half dozen distinctly different pedagogical techniques. In the research from which came my book *A Place Called School*, we found that a good many kindergarten teachers came close to this number, but it was common to find only two or three at the junior and senior high school level. Is this because those who teach teachers employ a narrow range of teaching techniques?

The Educative Foundations

The reader may have noticed that I refer to an *educative ecology of mind*, and I am now referring to the *educative* foundations of education rather than the more common *educational* foundations. I repeat my reason for this: I am using “educative” to embrace both the education of one's self and the educating one does as a teacher.

The first stage in the continuum of becoming a teacher is that of beginning to develop an educative ecology of mind. This begins for some teachers long before they enter a formal teacher education program. “Playing teacher” is a game that many children enjoy early on. It would be useful, I think, for potential teachers to spend some time observing

children playing teacher. I have done this and am sorry to report that discipline and punishment are common features. Often there will be one child wielding a stick of assumed authority. From time to time, the “teacher” sends a “pupil” to spend some time in the corner of the room. The sentenced child then becomes a further nuisance to the teacher by attempting to draw the attention of the other pupils. Are tomorrow's teachers sometimes born out of this experience? I hope not.

A good many of today's teachers did seriously consider or plan to be teachers early on. I was one of those. On encountering my first male teacher in the fifth grade, I came to realize that teaching was both a female and a male occupation. A large number of adults enter a college or university with the expectation of becoming teachers or are at least considering this as a career option. Too many of these have not adequately examined the institution's attention to teacher education. I am sure that good prospects often are lost to teaching because their interest and presence is not acknowledged until the beginning of the junior year. In my book *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*, produced out of a comprehensive study of the education of educators, I lay out a plan for identifying these people and for bringing them together in cohort groups to learn about teaching as a career by visiting schools, participating in seminars, and having available to them an advisor with whom they can discuss what might lie ahead of them in regard to the preparation program. My recommendations are readily available in that book, and so I shall not repeat them here.

My interest here is in that part of the teacher education continuum commonly referred to as educational foundations. Of

course, I would prefer that they be called the educative foundations of teaching in the hope that their contents would pay as much attention to students' *educative ecology of mind* as to students' understanding of such fields as anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. There is, in my judgment, considerable confusion of what the foundations of education are for and who should teach them.

The intended purpose of the foundations of education in a democracy is to provide aspiring educators with an understanding of the purpose of schooling in a democratic society; the social, political, and economic context in which schooling takes place; the developmental characteristics of the young; how learning occurs and is best induced; the history of schooling in the United States; federal, state, and local responsibilities for the schooling enterprise; and much, much more. Huge volumes have been written about what teachers know and should be able to do.

There are enormous variations regarding what goes on in courses taught under the label of foundations of education. Given the absence of clear purpose and clear identity for courses in this segment of the continuum of teacher education, it is no wonder that both students and faculty members rank these courses lower in usefulness than field experiences and much, much lower than student teaching. And it should not surprise us that erosion in the provision of foundation courses in the preparation of teachers has progressed to the point where they have virtually disappeared. Given that it is to the foundations of teaching that we should look in considering the source of the depth and breadth of the ecology of mind educators

should possess, they should rank high among our priorities.

Fashions in almost all domains of human experience come and go. For the past couple of decades, a fashion in teacher education has been increasingly that of ensuring practical experience, often favoring what teachers should do over what they should know and think. For a short time in the 1990s, it looked as though some of our flagship universities might take the lead in ensuring that future teachers would bring to their work a thorough grounding of knowledge and belief in the historical, philosophical, and social foundations of education. These institutions would be successful, it briefly appeared, in countering the springing up of programs that would provide only a brief introduction to classroom teaching followed by lightly supervised responsibility for their own classrooms. And there would be greater prospects for those individuals seeking university employment in teaching the history, philosophy, or sociology of education. However, it now appears that much of this demand was for scholars to teach primarily at the graduate level and advance their research careers in keeping with the priorities of major universities.

For a time, too, it looked as though some institutions of higher education would take the lead in breaking away from the whole of teacher education and general studies being crammed into four years with the result that many students were taking 135 or more semester hours or 200 or more quarter hours to qualify for teaching credentials. A few added a fifth year, and several added a quarter or a semester to their graduate programs in teacher education in order to provide more time for foundations studies,

instructional training, and teaching internships.

Now, however, there appear to be concerns that such extensions will cause downturns in student enrollment. It appears that university-based teacher education is, one more time, exchanging educational quality for consumer satisfaction.

Over the past couple of decades, the University of Washington has steadily been redesigning its teacher education programs to ensure the quality expected of this excellent university. Some new directions were called for, directions that required human and material resources not then adequately available. The choice by the Carnegie Corporation to fund this university and ten other institutions of higher learning in its Teachers for a New Era initiative provided the opportunity to break through these obstacles and reach higher ground. The five-quarter preparation program for elementary school teachers is a gratifying example of what has been accomplished, and the maturation of the minor in education, now approved, will be another. The closer connections with surrounding elementary and secondary institutions now becoming partner schools should ensure the strong tripartite infrastructure that is absolutely essential to the education and training of excellent

teachers. Sustaining and renewing this component of the university's excellence will not be easy. Create quality programs, and able, motivated people will come. Cater to consumer satisfaction as a top priority, and less able people will come. The right choice and its consequences are clear.



In subsequent issues of this second volume of *The Goodlad Occasional*, I will address the renewal required of each of the three cultures constituting the tripartite partnership and, from time to time, provide examples of the simultaneity of renewing the three together. I assume that there will be some readers who take exception with some of what I have written here and who will take exception with some of what I write in the future. I welcome disagreement and all thoughtful efforts to seek understanding of differing points of view. I hope that there will be serious discussion about the issues I endeavor to bring to the forefront.

John I. Goodlad
Institute for Educational Inquiry
124 East Edgar Street
Seattle, WA 98102
(206) 325-3010