

# THE GOODLAD OCCASIONAL

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On December 6, 2006, I wrote that Volume Two of *The Goodlad Occasional* would be devoted to a large slice of the continuum of the education and training of educators for the nation's schools – that is, the maturation of a professional teacher that begins with entry into a preparation program and ultimately is honed in practice and further learning. Over the past decade or so, there has been increasing reference to the preparation being a tripartite responsibility of the college of education and departments of the arts and sciences within a given university and the nearby elementary and secondary schools that provide the field experiences and internships of student teaching. Research has revealed that in the past there has been little to no communication and collaboration among these three parties in the educating and training process. Indeed, there has been at times considerable tension and even disagreement among the three. Today's conventional wisdom says that the three should be in close partnership embracing common purpose, joint planning, sharing of information, and more. This issue of *The Goodlad Occasional* addresses the necessary partnership.

## A Delicate Balance

Partnership and collaboration have appeal for most of us. In spite of that fact, both are marked by considerable failure. Witness the frequent falling apart

of both marriage and business partnerships. They require a great deal of work and commonly are harder to get out of than into. Consequently, they should be undertaken with great care and as much knowledge as possible regarding the quid pro quo. Carefully examining the pros and cons may appear to be self-serving, but if partnerships are one-sided in their benefits, they are unlikely to be productive and to last.

More than two decades ago, I proposed the coming together of colleges or universities and schools in *symbiotic* partnerships for the renewal of teacher education and simultaneously the individual renewal of each participating institution. Working out of the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington, colleagues and I set out to create a network of such partnerships. My dictionary defines *symbiosis* as the living together in more or less close union of two dissimilar organisms. My description of a school-university symbiotic partnership went somewhat as follows. First, the institutions are dissimilar in certain major characteristics. Second, through partnership, each stands to benefit by learning from the other something important that one does not possess but the other does. Third, the need for what the other has is sufficiently great for each to be willing to help the other in the area of need. (For a more extensive and sophisticated description of the potentially symbiotic characteristics, see my book *Educational Renewal: Better*

*Teachers, Better Schools*, pp. 103-104, published by Jossey-Bass in 1994.)

To work constructively together, each partner must regard the other as equal in status, rights, and the like. This and other problems surfaced to the extent that we disbanded the original network and carefully constructed in the early 1990s what became the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER), consisting today of twenty-four school-university partnerships in twenty states and one Canadian province that are much closer to the symbiotic model I had in mind. What we have learned is that the balance of expectations, commitment, mutual respect, willingness to revisit decisions once made, and so on is not easily created and sustained. But when such characteristics are present to a considerable degree, the joint work is deeply satisfying and tremendously productive.

### **Expectations**

The concept of the partner school has been central to the school-university partnerships of the NNER almost from the outset. A school-university symbiotic partnership is not a casual undertaking. Research shows that assigning student teachers to an array of elementary and secondary schools has often been rather casual. The relationship has almost always been one of connecting the student teacher with a practicing teacher in a given classroom. As a result, future teachers may learn a good deal about that particular classroom but very little about the conduct of other classrooms, relationships among teachers, the school as a whole, the role of the principal, teacher-parent relationships, and so on. The partner school needs to be regarded

to a considerable degree in the same way a hospital is regarded in the educating and training of a physician. Both school districts and institutions of higher education have a sizable investment of human and material resources in the development of first-rate partner schools where cohorts of future teachers become beginning teachers.

Currently, the NNER, the Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI), and the Bothell Campus of the University of Washington are engaged in a two-part initiative with principals of partner schools in one cohort and would-be principals of partner schools in a second cohort. All of these principals were nominated by partnership leaders in NNER settings scattered across the country. Recently, the IEI hosted the diverse group of principals representing partner schools from several different states. A major part of the discussion focused on ideal preparation programs for high-needs schools. They addressed such important topics as the selection of students to become teachers, the general education experiences they should have, the professional learning they should acquire, evaluation, communications among the university partners, and more.

Their expectations were exceedingly high. Clearly, none of them would accept in his or her school the common practice of the past wherein the university director of teacher education simply negotiated with a teacher and perhaps the principal in the assignment of a student teacher to a given classroom. We all wished that we had in the group professors of education and of the arts and sciences participating in teacher education so that we might assess their reactions to the expectations of these school principals. They expected student teachers coming to them to have

had experiences in schools and classrooms during the pre-student-teaching part of their preparation programs. They expected them to be highly motivated, child centered, concerned with improving student achievement, eager to learn, and so on. They expected a strong background of content knowledge and pedagogy, cultural sensitivity, past experiences in diverse cultural settings, a love of learning and teaching, a research-based approach to classroom practice, tight coordination among the institutional partners, ongoing interaction among the partners, frequent visits of university personnel to the school site, a role in the designing of preparation courses, a deep understanding of each partner institution's programs, and more.

Were the expectations of these principals reasonable or were they overly idealistic? Had university personnel from their partner universities back home been there, I am sure that they would have been questioning the precise level of expectation in each category of interest. What might be the expectations of university personnel in regard to their school partners? Would they expect to send a cohort group of student teachers to a given school instead of one future teacher to one classroom? Would they expect space to be assigned so that the members of this cohort group could come together to discuss their experiences? What might they expect of the teachers in regard to the evaluation of the student teachers? What might these professors expect in the way of interaction with school personnel? Would they pay

attention to suggestions from the school personnel regarding the content and methods of teaching? And what might be the expectations of education professors for arts and sciences professors and vice versa? If the expectations of university personnel are as idealistic as those of school personnel, is it reasonable to believe that these mutual expectations will be realized?

### **Fashions in Education**

In recent years, the rhetoric of tripartite collaboration in teacher education has become increasingly fashionable. As in many domains of human expectations, the rhetoric of desirability outruns the realities of implementation. How to conduct our educational ways differently and better is the stuff of educational conferences. Changing long-established regularities almost always involves close collaboration with others and almost always is hard work. I do not know of any body of hard data to support the desirability of tripartite institutional and educational renewal, but carefully integrating the three major components of ideal conceptions of teacher education programs is the right thing to do. And it can be very satisfying work.

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