

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN GOODLAD ON THE ROLE OF LABORATORY SCHOOLS AND THE STATE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

Editors: We appreciate the fact that you took time from a busy schedule to allow us to ask you a few questions for the National Association of Laboratory Schools Journal. We would like to know your thoughts on the years when you worked with laboratory schools. Since you served for a time as a laboratory school director and you've walked in our shoes, so to speak, could you comment on your experiences.

Goodlad: I think that I was lucky in that I came in as the director of the UCLA Laboratory School with an asset that it had not had before. That is, as a result of a study done by some people inside the university, comprehensive recommendations affirming the view of the laboratory school had been developed. It was the same old situation where every now and again the question is raised, what is this place supposed to be doing, what is it for? They had done a comprehensive study in which they had, to a quite considerable degree, defined what a laboratory school ought to do and what it ought to be about at this kind of institution.

I think it was the best report on laboratory schools that I had read up to that time. The recommendation that was significant pointed out that in order for the laboratory school to fulfill the functions they defined for it, it needed more than a principal to run the school with the children and work with the teachers. It also needed a director to link the school to the rest of the university and help it to perform its functions. So, I was the first director of that school.

The school's founding principal, Corinne Seeds, a great woman who had studied with William Heard Kilpatrick in progressive education, had run the school as a school for children. As the university became more research oriented, the question raised pertained to the role of the laboratory school in this kind of university.

The job was just too much for a principal to be able to take care of children and parents and meet the needs of the university, too. So, I came in as director with the opportunity to choose a principal to operate the school on a daily basis. That was a unique kind of beginning.

Editors: What do you believe should be the mission of laboratory schools today?

Goodlad: I think the laboratory school mission needs to be tied to the mission of the particular kind of institutional setting of which it is a part. I don't think that a laboratory school in a heavily research oriented university and a laboratory school in a heavily teacher preparing university should necessarily perform the same function.

It is a little ridiculous to think that, in a teacher preparing institution not heavily oriented to research, the laboratory school ought to serve the research interests of the faculty. Whereas, at a place like UCLA, the faculty always maintained, regardless of any reports that had been written, that the main purpose of the school was to serve the research interests of the faculty.

My own view of the laboratory school is that whatever other functions they perform, all laboratory schools should be places that do things often only talked about in the public sector. Special innovative things can be done in a laboratory school where there is control over admissions. If parents don't want these things, there are other schools they can go to.

The one thing that should be common to all laboratory schools is that they should be experimenting, trying other ways of doing things, showing how things might be done differently, opening up periodically to let people see what they have done. Take cooperative learning, for instance. Cooperative learning has been around in the literature for about twenty years. What does this look like when you develop it? Or, what does it look like to use a multiplicity of pedagogical approaches to get all of the children learning?

The laboratory school can be a creator and demonstrator of alternative ways of providing educational delivery systems. But, whether after that they are primarily involved in teacher training or primarily involved in research is going to be determined by the context of which they are a part.

Editors: What do you feel is the role of the laboratory school in the current restructuring efforts that are going on nationwide? How can the laboratory school be a beacon for change, so to speak?

Goodlad: Well, I think that is what is happening in regard to renewing both school and teacher education in our work. Once we begin to say that teacher education programs ought to be conducted in professional development or partner schools, in large part, those partner schools in turn ought to be excellent renewing schools. It shifts the responsibility for teacher education in a laboratory school. That is, no longer does the laboratory school become the prime setting for student teaching. It becomes a place for future teachers to get opportunities to view new things going on.

I think this movement reduces the student teaching roles of laboratory schools enormously. Many school districts do not think that laboratory schools prepare teachers for them. If the laboratory school at UCLA had been the only place available for student teaching, students would have endangered their job pros-

pects in other schools in the area. You had to do student teaching in a public school district and get a good grade from the cooperating teacher from that school district.

No longer does a laboratory school have to be the slave, if you will, of a teacher education program. It can be a place announcing, "We're going to do interesting, different things so that students can get a glimpse of alternative ways to deliver education." The laboratory school can play a role in demonstrating alternative ways to conduct schooling so that renewing schools can better see those alternatives which are available to them.

Editors: What can the National Association of Laboratory Schools do to help perpetuate laboratory schools and help the laboratory school movement go forward in today's society? With more and more teachers being prepared by universities, obviously laboratory schools cannot handle so large a load. So, what can NALS do to help perpetuate the laboratory schools which we believe in very deeply and feel serve a very important purpose?

Goodlad: Well, it's a given that an organization is going to try to preserve itself. This is always dangerous because organizations that try to preserve themselves for their own ends in the field of education tend not to survive.

We have quite a history to show that when a laboratory school that had few friends in a given university got into trouble, the only support it had was from the people who taught there and the parents who sent their children there. It was not at all uncommon for some of the strongest criticisms and strongest moves to eliminate the school to come from inside the university itself.

It would seem to me that what the laboratory school movement needs at the present time, and the present time is critical, is a very careful introspective and, if you will, extraspective, look at how the lab schools can answer the questions that you just raised of me before.

It would seem to me that if NALS could secure a grant in order to get an independent inquiry into the role of the laboratory school at this juncture in our history, that would provide a useful service, as well as rich material for your journal, rich material for your conferences, and from such a report could evolve many kinds of activities.

I have not been involved with NALS for quite a few years. I addressed it on at least two occasions in the past when I was still director at UCLA. The last time I remember being associated with NALS I was brought in to answer the question, "What can we do to save ourselves?" That was a pretty depressing meeting and I wasn't very encouraging. I said I didn't think that the laboratory schools had vigorously enough convinced people that they had a role to play.

Now, NALS should do a study of the lab school movement, the current laboratory school situation, the prospects for the future and what the future direction should be. The study group might include two or three people from laboratory schools. But, I think it ought to be, in many ways, an independent review because any effort that is designed to tell the world what laboratory schools ought to do that comes from the laboratory schools group itself would be regarded as self serving.

Editors: Over the last ten or fifteen years we have gone through a series of educational reforms. As future education and historians look back over what's happened in education in the 1980s and 1990s, what do you think is going to stand out as the legacy of this period?

Goodlad: I think that if a historical perspective were employed, it would inevitably conclude that educational reform has failed. Schools haven't failed, but educational reform has failed.

The indigenous educational community doesn't talk about reforming itself. It is outsiders who talk about reforming the schools—politicians, business people, and so on. And, they have endeavored in several eras, including the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, to press for school reform.

One would have to conclude that school reform which has been politically driven, and we need to make that distinction, has failed. It has failed primarily for two reasons. First, it has asked the schools to do what the schools cannot do. That is, it has asked the schools to be directly involved in improving the economy of the nation in the global market and putting better jobs on the table for workers. Schools can't do that.

The level of an educational system makes a difference in the economy of a country, but once your educational system is mature, as it is in the United States, that difference is very modest. An educational system can only be geared to stimulating the economy of the nation when the nation has an immature school system.

We know that when you get fifteen percent of your population with a high school education for the first time, the economy takes off. When you raise it to thirty percent, it usually continues to do well. But, once you get a mature educational system, the relationship between the performance of that system and the economy is very modest. And most economists know that.

If you take a look at some of the criticisms over the last few years and if you look at the writing of economists, they have even used the word "silly" in regard to saying the school is going to make us economically competitive with Japan. The illustration I love to use is that, six or seven years ago, there was a Gallup Poll or Harris Poll that asked a sample of the American people to rank a number of major economic powers in the world. The second question was, "Do you think the country you picked will continue to be an economic power into the indefinite future?"

The country most people picked to be the major economic power was Japan. The answer to second question was, "Yes, it will continue." The schools were condemned in the media over the situation.

Five years or so later, the same poll was taken and this time the United States not only came out on top, but the dominant response was that the situation would continue. There wasn't a single word in the press to say, "Look at the wonderful job our schools have done."

We ask the schools to do what they can't do and when the schools don't do what they can't do we blame them for not doing what they can't do. The result is that it takes our attention away from what the schools can do and results in very little support for what the school can do. That's the first problem. The second

problem is that the model of educational reform is faulty. It's a linear model, an input-output model. You put this in here and something will come out there as though somehow or other you had a static relationship between a teacher and a child.

Here's your school. It's a box. Put things perceived to be good into it and good things will come out the other end. However, inputs cost money.

So, the next move was, don't worry about putting in, just worry about what comes out. Outcomes. Don't put anything in but you'll get outcomes. That model doesn't fit any school I know. A school is not a linear, predictable thing. It is a culture unto itself. It's a unique culture of movement, interactions, unpredictability, and so on.

When a teacher comes into a school each day, the last thing on his/her mind is whether or not what I do today will improve the nation's economy. What's on that teacher's mind is how do I get this kid excited about learning. Or, how do I get the message home about this youngster getting some sleep. Those are the things on the minds of teachers. If you want to improve schools, those are things in schools you have to deal with. Reform movements ignore them.

What has happened, to get back to your historical question, is that under the umbrella of a politically-driven reform movement, with money made available from private and government sources, a lot of schools have made some significant progress. We have some very good schools around the country. They are very satisfying places for anyone who would want to send a child there. The trouble is, in making a school a great place for children, a great place for teachers, a place that parents like, we do not necessarily increase achievement test scores very much.

What I would hope that an insightful historian would say is that school reform as conducted during the concluding half century in the United States, politically driven school reform, has failed. However, many schools managed to sustain themselves under increasingly difficult circumstances.

The loss of social capital in communities and families and the rise of the value of financial capital to replace social capital meant less attention was given to the infrastructure, including schools.

During this period of time, parents became a minority group. There are fewer parents today with children in schools than there are people who don't have children in school. As a result, fewer and fewer people want to support schools because they don't use them and they don't understand the public purposes of schooling. The major challenge before us today is to restore the idea that schools have a public purpose and they are not just private places for the benefit of individuals.

I think that the most precarious situation that we are in right now is trying to have people understand that just as we must support parks, roads, and the infrastructure, part of that infrastructure is the schools. And, when we pay taxes for schools, we don't own them as private possessions.

Editors: If you could snap your fingers and make any one change in the way teachers are trained or in the current practices of training teachers, what would it be?

Goodlad: As someone who works systemically and thinks of institutions as ecosystems, that is very difficult. I would say the

one change I would make is to try to bring together around a common mission all of the people who prepare teachers. This would include those who, often unwittingly, are preparing teachers in their disciplines, people who are regarded as teacher educators because they deal with the theory and practice of teaching, and the people who are practitioners in the schools.

I would like to see these groups working as an integrated coherent faculty addressing the mission of teacher education together. I think that would then give us a chance of having a teacher education program that has all of the parts fitting together rather than them being scattered the way they are today.

Editors: How would you view the current status of teacher education in the United States? What do you see as the positives and what are the negatives from the point of view of public perception?

Goodlad: I think that the greatest negative is an old one and it is our casual, neglectful attitude and actions toward supporting teacher education as professional preparation. When you couple that with this notion that we are all entitled to teach, the result is that you get the very complex, complicated process of cultivating learning in children being managed and directed by a teaching force of rather meager preparation. And, even the meager preparation is always being threatened by shortcut routes to do it more cheaply and unprofessionally.

Put bluntly, the biggest negative is that the gates for admission and preparation for teaching are always loosely latched, and that the lowest common denominator with respect to teacher education and preparing teachers tends to win in the long run. The high level long term preparation program of cohort groups of students under a mentoring faculty is very difficult to defend financially in our society. That's the big downside.

I think the upside is an old one, too. So many people at work on the street and on the farm can name teachers who did incredible things in their lives. And so, we have this idealistic conception of the teacher, coupled with casual, almost contemptuous, treatment of the circumstances that would produce the good teachers that we get virtually by accident.

I think of the conflict that is going on right now over whether or not within a relatively short period of time we can establish the idea that teachers must indeed be prepared with the same care and depth as other professionals or whether teaching is to be a part-time, short-term occupation that people will move through. We make it very expensive by training teachers the cheap way.

It is now known that it takes, on the average, five teachers to make one career. That is not true with lawyers, that is not true with doctors, and not true with engineers. It takes five teachers to make one career. That is the expensive result when you prepare teachers "on the cheap."

Editors: You spoke recently about the role of clinical experiences in the teacher education program. How important are clinical experiences in training teachers?

Goodlad: I wish we could get another word for "clinical" experiences. My colleagues and I get criticized because we use medical analogies and metaphors. I wish that we had better ones but we haven't created them. I wish we had something else other

than "clinical" because that has a medical connotation to it. The master teacher comes closer to what I am thinking about.

Returning to the role of the laboratory school, it seems to me that here is a challenge to the laboratory school. It ought to be a place where even with relatively short experiences, the future teacher is able to see hands-on teaching at its best. I think the problem with teacher education is that it does not provide a sufficient model or a sufficient frequency of a variety of models.

It is interesting to note from our research that if you ask students at the junior/senior high school level what subjects are of most interest to them and which they like most, consistently they put three subjects first that are not required for college admission and are not regarded as being highly academic—the arts, physical education and vocational education. Those three consistently rank above all other subjects in interest and popularity on the part of students.

If you analyze those three subjects, they are the three that most frequently demonstrate the behavior desired. The coach in physical education shows that this is the way you do it. The art teacher, if she is a real art teacher, comes by and says let me suggest this to you, let me show you this. She models. Hardly anywhere else is that true.

To be able in the laboratory school to show, for the neophyte to be immediately able to see the translation of the concept or principle into clinical practice, is essential. Maybe we would be better off just calling it "practice."

The reason I have been using the archaic word "pedagogy" so much is its definition: the art and science of teaching. We are really talking about the art of teaching. The pedagogical art of teaching is what future teachers don't get enough of. If there ever was an area that says, "do as I say, don't do as I do," it is teacher preparation.

You can go into class after class and see teachers in teacher education demonstrating what that teacher would not want their own students to do, like lecturing eighty-eight percent of the time. It is amazing. Don't do as I do, do as I tell you.

Editors: What is on the horizon for John Goodlad? What do you see yourself doing next? Where does your interest lie?

Goodlad: My options are now limited. I am hardly a kid. My administrative assistant, Paula and I chuckle from time to time because of letters asking me to make suggestions for distinguished professorships and deanships around the country. Do you have somebody to name? The bottom line is the query: Would you by any chance be interested. We chuckle because I have retired a couple times already.

There are only two things that I find are good about advancing age and I am doing both of them. I am living where I want

and I am doing what I want. When you ask about what is in the future, the answer is continuing living where I am and doing what I am doing.

My life all along has been heavily involved in organizational and administrative work. There has hardly been a time in my life when I haven't been administering something. I am now at the point where I have stopped doing many of the things I have done in the past. This is very painful because education has always been so satisfying to me. When I cut out something I do it as though I were cutting out an organ.

For example, I love to teach and I was teaching the moral dimensions of leadership component of the Danforth program at the University of Washington. That runs through the entire year. It wasn't very time demanding and it was wonderfully satisfying, but every time I wanted to plan something, there it was on my schedule. I finally said that I do not want that on my schedule any more, as much as I love it. I enjoy administration, especially its creative parts, but I have to give it up. I am not leaving what I am doing. I am simply recognizing that I am surrounded by some very capable people. They are all younger than I am. I have a committee at work now working on to restructure things in part to let me do more of what I want to do.

There was a wonderful story in the Sunday paper in Seattle recently about a very creative investment entrepreneur who lives in the Tacoma area. He advises companies that advise people on investing. He is advising the advisors. He has had a very successful business, but his years are moving on. He has had a kind of a family business with socials, picnics and excellent benefit programs. Everyone loves to work for this corporation. One day he said to himself, I wonder what would happen if I dropped dead tomorrow. So he sent a memo his key management people to the effect that he had dropped dead. Now, what are you going to do with the company? His key managers then got together over the weekend and restructured the business. He is still very active in the company, but he is doing more of what he wants to do. That is what we are in the process of doing with our initiatives.

I have some more things that I want to say in writing. I have to get rid of business travel. I have to get rid of management in order to have sustained time for some of the writing that I want to do. On the other side, I happen to be a lover of boats, particularly wooden boats. I had a period of about fifteen months which were both frustrating and satisfying when I had a wooden boat built for me. It sits idle too much of the time. I plan to do more writing, boating and fishing and some of what I have been doing in our National Network for Educational Renewal while letting other people take over most of the administrative side. I'm not sure that my wife, Lynn, fully believes me.