

## Teaching On Both Sides of the Classroom Door

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There is, in the Goodlad corpus, a fascinating implication about where teaching occurs. For most of us, teaching occurs only on one side of the classroom door. The side the students are on. However, as one reads the writings of John Goodlad there is a growing sense that teaching involves more than working with students. It also involves working with one's colleague teachers, with members of one's community, with fellow citizens of the state and nation, and with the human species. This is the other side of the classroom door, the side that faces out to the school, the community, the nation, and the planet.

The thought seems almost counter-intuitive. We understand how teaching can take place on the classroom side of the door, but how does it take place on the other side? Perhaps the reason this question is perplexing is that we think of teaching solely as instructing, as conveying information to or facilitating understanding in students. For Goodlad, teaching is more than that. In addition to instructing, teaching is also serving as a good steward of one's school, keeping one's community informed about education, being an effective citizen in a democratic nation, and being a transformational learner. Thus there are at least five critical roles for a teacher, only one of them (albeit in many ways the central one) performed on the classroom side of the door.

Before exploring these roles in any depth, it is important to note that I am interpreting, not describing, Goodlad's work when I assert that for him teaching amounts to more than what goes on behind the classroom door. As noted ahead, Goodlad places a great deal of emphasis on the role of steward, but does not directly argue that the roles of informant to the community, citizen in a democracy, and transformational learner are non-classroom roles. My doing so here is more an interpretation of Goodlad than it is of how he presents his own ideas. However that is part of the charm of rich scholarship; it expands and alters the thinking of those who engage it. It is the rich scholarship of John Goodlad that creates the occasion for me to wonder whether our conceptions of teaching are not enhanced by breaking the boundaries set by the walls of a classroom, thinking of teaching as extending to the school, the community, the nation, and to humanity at large.

It may be that I am abusing the definition of “teaching” by having it cover activities outside the classroom. Perhaps it would be more correct if I argued that the *work* of the *teacher* encompasses far more than what takes place behind the classroom door, and restrict the term “teaching” solely to what occurs when the teacher meets students on the classroom side of the door. This more precise construction does no harm to the argument here, so we may let it stand. However, rather than refer awkwardly to “the work of the teacher,” as if I were engaged in a sociological inquiry into the occupational nature of teaching, I prefer to simply write about the notion of teaching, in all its simultaneous simplicity and complexity.

With this modest caveat out of the way, let us turn our attention to that side of the door most of us are on when we think about the activity of teaching.

### **On the Classroom Side of the Door**

In 1970, Goodlad co-authored *Behind the Classroom Door*.<sup>1</sup> It is this informative (and discomfoting) little book that creates the occasion for my thinking of teaching as taking place on both sides of the door. In this book Goodlad and his colleagues report on what they found in 150 classrooms in 67 schools around the nation. Although the findings are depressing, they offer much insight into what is involved in examining teaching as it occurs in the role of instructor. This study tells us a great deal about what teachers do on the classroom side of the door<sup>2</sup>—even though what they do is not, for the most part, consistent with the ten “reasonable expectations” that Goodlad and his colleagues established for teachers in their role as instructors of children and youth.

Of particular interest here is how often, when we find that teachers do not meet our expectations as instructors, we are unable to break the boundaries of the classroom in order to find a remedy. If fault is found in the role of instructor, then it is the role of instructor that we try to repair, when it might be that the role of instructor would change for the better if we attended to other roles that assuredly accompany it. Attention to these accompanying roles carries us to the other side of the classroom door.

### **On the Other Side of the Door**

The role of instructor is not the only one a teacher performs, even if it is the one that garners most, sometimes all, of our attention. In making this claim, it is useful to distinguish between *incidental* and *connected* roles.

Incidental roles are those that may impact the work of teaching, but are not essential to or tightly linked to the activities of teaching. For example, a teacher may also be a sister, a worshiper, a wife, and a mother, but these roles are incidental to teaching.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, there are roles that are tightly connected to the work of teaching, and these are the roles of interest here. As noted earlier, there are at least four that one might extract from Goodlad's work. They are steward to the school, informant to the community, citizen in a democracy, and transformational learner.

To contend that these roles are tightly connected to teaching is to argue that there are close conceptual links between the role of instructor and the four other roles, between the role behind the classroom door and the roles performed on the other side of the classroom door. These conceptual links are forged by the historical evolution of school teaching in American society, by the theories we prize as setting the foundations for education in a democracy, and by the social traditions that have come to characterize the nature of teaching in U.S. society. Hence to contend that there are teaching roles that transcend the classroom role of instructor is to argue that there is a conceptual, and interdependent, relationship between good work as an instructor and good work as a steward, informant, citizen and learner. In a moment we will turn to an examination of each of these roles. But before doing so, I want to reiterate a point made a moment ago.

When what teachers do fails to live up to our expectations for them, there are a number of responses at our disposal. One is to address the conditions under which the teaching occurs, such as when facilities are in disrepair and teaching resources are scarce.<sup>4</sup> Another is to address the circumstances of student life, as in the case of highly impoverished or racially different learners.<sup>5</sup> A third is to rethink the work of teaching, as we have done in so many of the national reports about educational reform over the last decade and one-half.<sup>6</sup> In the case of so many of these reports, teaching is understood exclusively as instructing, as an activity that takes place behind the classroom door. This conception accords with our common sense view of the activity, and causes little consternation under most circumstances. When, however, we seek to change what teachers do behind the classroom door, we might experience far more success examining roles conceptually connected to instructing, rather than focusing exclusively on instruction itself.

Looking beyond, not only behind, the classroom door is one of the more exciting and provocative implications of Goodlad's work on teaching. As roles beyond the door are described below, consider their connections to

instruction, and the extent to which the nature of classroom instruction might be advanced by cultivating more profound understandings of these other roles. We begin with the role that Goodlad himself has addressed so often, that of steward to the school.

### **In the Role of Steward to the School**

It comes as no secret to anyone that a teacher does not spend his or her entire professional life in a classroom. That teacher is a member of a school faculty, an employee of a school district, and often, a public servant. There are duties and obligations incurred by membership in a faculty and employment by a school system. They pertain to the exercise of what Goodlad calls "good stewardship."<sup>7</sup> The notion of a steward is derived from that of caretaker, one who looks out for or manages the affairs of an estate, club, or other organization. Teachers are stewards of their schools, looking after the school as an educational entity committed to the advancement of both its students and the larger human ecology. In this role, teachers have responsibilities beyond their respective classrooms and beyond their personal preferences as teachers. These responsibilities include the character and quality of learning experienced by all students in the school, the mission and conduct of the school as a whole, as well as the place of the school in the community it serves.

Among the reasons Goodlad stresses the notion of teacher as steward is his conception of the role played by the school as an organizational and physical entity. He has consistently argued over the many decades of his scholarly work that the school is the critical unit of change. It is not the school district, the state, or the individual classroom that successfully serves as the focal point for educational change, but the school site. He marshals extensive empirical data in support of this view, as well as a good bit of theory.<sup>8</sup> Assuming he is correct, the role of steward is profoundly important, for it will determine, to a large extent, the capacity of a given school to renew itself or to respond thoughtfully to the efforts of others to reform the school.

Just what are the duties and responsibilities of a steward and how do we prepare teachers to exercise them responsibly? There are few ready answers to this question because we have given so little attention to it. For example, most of the teacher preparation programs with which I am familiar attend almost entirely, if not exclusively, to preparing the prospective teacher for the role of instructor. Once hired, the new teacher experiences an induction into the school, but it is often unplanned and its subtext is

more likely to be about how to get along by going along than it is about the responsibilities of exercising care for the sustenance and advancement of the school as a whole.

Indeed, to fully appreciate the responsibilities of stewardship, a teacher must have a deep and thorough understanding of the nature and purpose of formal education in a free society. Good stewardship is less a matter of maintaining a happy workplace or having effective means for resolving interpersonal tiffs (although these are not unimportant features) than it is a matter of serving as a constructive and helpful colleague in the joint aspiration of making the school a good place for children to learn and teachers to work. To have this understanding of the school as a place engaged in education as an ideal is to incur obligations beyond stewardship. It places the teacher in the role of helping those outside the school understand what education is about and what schools are for.<sup>9</sup>

### **In the Role of Informant to the Community**

How do parents and other members of a local community learn about the purpose and the practice of schooling in a free society? Through their own experiences, of course, and by means of newspapers, magazines, books, radio and television. However, as anyone who has ever read a newspaper account or seen a television report on something with which he or she is intimately familiar, these media are unable to offer much in the way of history or context for an event, and they quite often assume a specific editorial perspective. Thus the larger public's view of what schools are for and what happens in them may be and often are slanted by the print and broadcast media.<sup>10</sup> This distortion is not always negative, but it is frequently unbalanced and typically far too truncated to serve as the basis for thoughtful deliberation.

If a community is to receive a complete and balanced report on the work of its schools, it is most likely to obtain such a report from the people who work there, particularly teachers and school administrators. For teachers, the major opportunities to inform arise from communication with parents, from participation in local professional associations, and from forging relationships with school officials who are specifically charged with public affairs and community relations. For example, letters carried home by students are often an excellent opportunity to inform parents not only about homework, but about the larger point and purpose of what will take place in the classroom. Local chapters of teacher professional associations also have opportunities to assist teachers in serving as informants, but this role

is often overshadowed by more insular matters. As such, opportunities are often lost to tell stories or share insights that might be far more effective, in the longer run, for relieving the stresses of more “interior” problems faced by both teachers and their schools.

The geographic area in which I presently reside is served by several different school districts (including an intermediate school and a community college district). Each of these entities issues newsletters to the community, but few contain articles about the more substantive tasks of education in a democratic society. These publications are almost always about boundaries, busses, buildings and budgets, with little said about why are these b-words are vital to the larger undertaking in which we are mutually engaged. Increasing the awareness and understanding of the teacher’s role as informant to the community could have a salutary impact on what now passes for “information to the community about our schools.” It is, however, a role for which few teachers are prepared, and in which few members of the community are willing to acknowledge teachers.

Gaining a better understanding of the next role offers additional insight into the informant role, and a more powerful justification for it. Indeed, there is a close connection between the two, as will become evident in a moment.

### **In the Role of Citizen in a Democracy**

Why is the role of citizen so special to teaching? This question is a natural one, given that we are all likely to hold the status of citizens in a democracy. As we all hold it, why place such stress on it for teachers? The answer lies in the intimate and critically important relationship between democracy and education. As Benjamin Barber remarks, “Democracy is not a natural form of association; it is an extraordinary and rare contrivance of cultivated imagination.”<sup>11</sup> To sustain democracy, education is essential. It cannot be any form of education, but must be an “apprenticeship of liberty,” where one is engaged in “learning to be free.”<sup>12</sup> A central task of formal schooling in American society is this apprenticeship of liberty, teaching the meaning of freedom, the means for its preservation and for its enhancement.

While there are likely to be few dissenters to this high-minded prose, there are many who believe that these noble goals are achieved with courses in American history, civics, and social studies. Although such courses may help us succeed in mastering the *procedures* of citizenship, they do not cultivate the *qualities* of a good citizen. Once again, Barber is

helpful, as he describes these qualities: "The literacy required to live in civil society, the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act deliberately in a pluralistic world, the empathy that permits us to hear and thus accommodate others, all involve skills that must be acquired."<sup>13</sup> The cultivation of these qualities make exceptional demands on teachers, demands that differ from those made on persons in most other occupations.

Fulfillment of these demands requires that teachers understand the qualities of a citizen as well as the procedures of citizenship, and that they fully meet the conditions imposed by both. Thus it is not only vital that teachers engage in enacting the procedures of citizenship, such as jury duty, voting, public deliberation, and other forms of participation in the political life of the community, state, and nation, but that teachers also cultivate and practice the qualities of citizenship, such as openness, tolerance, mutual respect, reflective thought, considerate speech, and compromise. The teacher, in contrast to many others, not only must possess and practice these qualities, but must do so in ways that cultivate their acquisition by those who are their students.

Goodlad puts the point well when stating that "the public purpose of schooling in a democratic society should be the teaching of those altruistic dispositions that cultivate the transcendent self in the democratic community."<sup>14</sup> In this statement, Goodlad connects the teacher as democratic citizen to the teacher as transcendent self. That is what I propose to do in considering the teacher as a transformational learner.

### **In the Role of Transformational Learner**

When we think of the teacher solely in the role of instructor, we may easily lose sight of the fact that the teacher must also be a learner, and that being good at learning may call on different capacities and skills than being a instructor. Certainly we will have no difficulty believing that a teacher must be a learner of pedagogy (the art and science of teaching) and of his or her content areas (such a mathematics, history or language). In matters of method and content, all of us, I think, are prepared to view the teacher as a learner. Yet this sense of the teacher as learner is not transformational.

Transformational learning is learning that changes, transforms, the learner in profound ways. It is, as well, learning that enables the learner to share the transformation with other learners. In other words,

transformational learning changes both the learner and the learner's capacity to change other learners. In *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*, Goodlad remarks that teachers must learn their content twice: "The first time in order that it be part of their being, the second time in order to teach it."<sup>15</sup> This delightful notion of having to learn your material twice touches on what I mean by transformational learning.

Part of the work of teaching is modeling learning. It is being a learner so that your students can see what is involved in learning the material that you are teaching. Too often students have the impression that the teacher is not learning the material, but has already mastered it and is engaged solely in conveying it. So often, in this modality, the learners have no sense of what it means to be deeply engaged in and fascinated by the content, or of how the pursuit of this content slowly alters the minds and hearts of those who study it. In so stating, I am not contending that the students can encounter the material at the level the teacher is encountering it, but I am urging that the teachers share the character of their encounters with content with their students. If the students are to become fascinated with what is taught, the person teaching must also be fascinated with what is taught.

There is more. It is not only a matter of the teacher conveying a measure of his or her own engagement with the material to be learned, but conveying as well how this material is transformative for the teacher, how the teacher is different because of this material and how students are likely to be different as a result of their coming to appreciate and master it. How am I different because of the music I listen to, the art I perceive, the mathematics I understand, the history I know, the languages I speak? For a teacher to learn transformationally is to learn twice, but with a slightly different spin than Goodlad gives it (though I believe he would welcome this difference). The first time is to gain a sense of how the teacher is transformed by the learning; the second time, to gain a sense of how students may be transformed by learning this material. A transformational learner is one who sets out to learn something not only to teach that thing, but to change oneself and to change one's students. In William Ayer's language, teaching is "world-changing work."<sup>16</sup> Changing the world begins first with changing oneself, then others. Until we have looked into our own minds and hearts with serious and constructive intent, we are little qualified to peer into the hearts and minds of our students.

In the agenda of educational renewal espoused by Goodlad and his colleagues, there are nineteen postulates that stipulate the conditions



necessary for the education of all those engaged in the formal schooling of the young. Two of these postulates are relevant to the role of transformational learner. Postulate eight calls for “future teachers to move beyond being students of organized knowledge to become teachers who inquire into both knowledge and its teaching.”<sup>17</sup> Postulate nine calls for “a socialization process through which candidates transcend their self-oriented student preoccupations to become more other-oriented in identifying with the culture of teaching.”<sup>18</sup> These two postulates stipulate the initial conditions for transformational learning. I would add a third, calling on teachers to see that before they can become engaged in “world-changing work,” they must be engaged in self-changing work.

Teachers ought to be students themselves, and students in the presence of their students. And they should do this as a part of the work of teaching. It is this effort that contributes to making teaching endlessly fascinating for both for teachers and students.

### **To Teach on Both Sides of the Classroom Door**

If I have succeeded in making my point, you may now see teaching a bit differently. It is more than instructing. It is also being a steward, an informant, a citizen, and a special kind of learner. These additional roles are cultivated and practiced on what I have called “the other side” of the classroom door. Yet because of their close conceptual connection to instruction, they are roles that enhance and enlarge the role of instruction. The teacher who is an exemplary steward, informant, citizen, and learner will be a very different kind of instructor from one who is none, or only some, of these. These differences will ceaselessly redound to the benefit of the teacher’s students.

Thinking of teaching as being engaged in multiple roles conceptually connected to instruction adds another dimension to the work. Those who instruct others gain a special purchase on the roles of steward, informant, citizen, and learner. To instruct is to experience these other roles in extraordinary dimension, for not only does a teacher have the chance, as so many others of us also do, to be a steward, informant, citizen, and learner, but the teacher—unlike the others—has the opportunity to constantly see his or her reflection in these roles as the effort is made to educate one’s fellow human beings. The resulting synergy provides what may be the greatest gift of teaching, for it is work that not only helps us instruct, but also to grow as stewards, informants, citizens and learners. John Goodlad does not say it in exactly this way, but what he says enables me to say it so. I

hope these thoughts on a portion of his work do justice to that work, while perhaps adding a wrinkle to it that otherwise may have been hidden for some. It is a wrinkle that has offered me many hours of pleasurable contemplation, as I think about the many ways to advance the work of teaching without restricting myself solely to the view that teaching is what takes place on one side of the classroom door. I find it much more invigorating and fascinating to think of teaching occurring on both sides of the door.

### Notes

1. John I. Goodlad, M. Frances Klein, and Associates, *Behind the Classroom Door* (Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1970).
2. In the same spirit as other studies of classrooms, such as Dan Lortie's *Schoolteacher* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) and Phillip Jackson's *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).
3. There are readers who will surely object to this formulation of incidental and connected roles, believing that, for example, the role of parent is vital to success in the role of teacher, or that of parishioner is a great aid to promoting the moral development of the young. In the United State, however, there is little in our history, our theory, or our educational practices that argues for a tight connection between being a teacher, on the one hand, and being a parent, sibling, or member of a religious community, on the other.
4. A case in point is the description of the hideously deprived school settings described by Jonathan Kozol is *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991).
5. Kozol, cited immediately above, does this in the book that followed *Savage Inequalities*, entitled *Amazing Grace* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995). One may also read soul-shaking accounts in such works as Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are No Children Here* (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1992) and Daniel Coyle's *Hardball* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993).
6. The most recent, which includes useful commentary on many prior reports, is *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, a report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's

Future, 1996).

7. John I. Goodlad, *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), p. 51.
8. See John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), and prior research cited in that work.
9. Once again I am indebted to the title of a Goodlad book for the phrasing of an idea. In this case, it is John I. Goodlad, *What Schools Are For* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1979, 1994). Although this book is not specifically addressed to performing the roles of steward or informant, its content would be of great value to those acting in these roles.
10. A telling case for such distortion is made by David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle, *The Manufactured Crisis* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995).
11. Benjamin Barber, *An Aristocracy of Everyone* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), p. 5.
12. Barber, *Aristocracy of Everyone*, p. 4.
13. Barber, *Aristocracy of Everyone*, p. 4.
14. John I. Goodlad, *In Praise of Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), p. 43. As in the case of stewardship, there is much that Goodlad has written on the democratic obligations of schooling and teaching. In addition to *In Praise of Education* (particularly chapter 2), see his contributions in John I. Goodlad and Timothy J. McMannon, Eds., *The Public Purpose of Education and Schooling* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997); and Roger Soder, Ed., *Democracy, Education, and the Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).
15. *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*, p. 52.
16. William Ayers, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993), p. 8.
17. John I. Goodlad, *Educational Renewal* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), p. 82.

18. *Educational Renewal*, p. 83.