Tyler and Goodlad Speak on American Education: A Critique

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Selected thoughts by two noted American educators are now available in their own words through a set of audio tapes. Given here is a critique of the ideas and discussions presented in this set.

IN these days when berating public education is a popular sport, it is refreshing to hear two distinguished educators identify some very concrete and significant accomplishments of the public schools over the past 200 years. "Dialogue on American Education," a set of four cassette tapes recording conversations of John I. Goodlad and Ralph W. Tyler, provides some desperately needed data which educators and interested lay citizens can cite proudly to say that American schools do make a difference and are worthy of our support.

Three rather impressive achievements are named by Tyler in the tapes:

1. Maintaining a stable society in spite of periods of strife and confusion
2. Providing social mobility for young people beyond the socioeconomic status of their parents which is two times greater than in any other society
3. Educating very diverse groups of people for citizenship and productive work.

Consideration of the accomplishments is wisely presented along with a sobering account of the problems and issues confronting the public schools. Some of the problems which Tyler and Goodlad believe are currently facing the schools are:

1. Reaching students with little or no education in order to help them learn to live in a society which demands a considerable amount of education
2. Helping adolescents grow into adulthood
3. The segmentation problem of each type of educator belonging to his or her own exclusive organization which does not provide interaction among all those involved in the educative process
4. How best to involve the community in the schools
5. Development of the moral and ethical character of students during the schooling process
6. A redefinition of what equality in schooling means
7. Helping students have access to a complex society
8. The operational procedures of schools
9. The issue of centralization and decentralization
10. The reaching of disadvantaged youth
11. The lack of a challenging program for students in their final year of high school.

Goodlad suggests that since we are no longer in the midst of such an explosive

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growth period as that experienced in the recent past, we now may be better able to devote the resources needed to deal with these pervasive problems. He states that although many people are dissatisfied with schooling today, it may be because some of the recent expectations for the schools have been unrealistic. He observes that the schools over time have done a remarkable job at moving along with society. A central problem in keeping schools moving along with a changing society is how to make the schools flexible enough to deal with needed changes in an effective way.

Trends Are Identifiable

The speakers assess the process of schooling over an extended period of time. The long range view of education which the speakers reflect upon helps the listener better to interpret the present and anticipate the future. The roots of several current trends are amply documented in the tapes (as are most of the points made by the speakers), both as to the time they were initiated and the contributions of the people who helped develop them. A number of trends were identified as receiving attention today as well as having received considerable attention in the past: individualization, competency-based teacher education, career education, behavioral objectives, and personalized, meaningful education for all students.

In the taped discussions, each of the speakers considers a few of his own considerable and impressive contributions to American education. Certainly any well prepared students of curriculum will have considered the Tyler rationale during their studies. This procedure, outlined in a short monograph, has been used extensively in the United States and internationally.[1] Tyler and Goodlad discuss how it was developed, how it has been used by each of the speakers, some criticisms of it, and how Tyler would modify it. Goodlad identifies two criticisms

[1] Ralph W. Tyler. *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950.



of the rationale. The first criticism is that the procedure outlined is an orderly, logical way to plan a curriculum, but it may inhibit learning based on student needs and interests. To this criticism Tyler replies that each person must decide for himself or herself how to develop curricula. Tyler's questions are general ones and nothing about them dictates how they are to be answered. One of the three data sources to draw from in answering the first question regarding what purposes the school should have is the student, in addition to society and subject matter. Examples are given as to how data about the student may be used in answering the questions. Goodlad observes that there is a tendency to answer the questions about curriculum with data from the general population whereas the intent of the rationale is that the questions need to be answered specifically for the particular group of students who will be using the curricula.

The second criticism often cited in using the Tyler rationale is called the normative problem by Goodlad—how the question regarding what goals the schools *should* have is to be answered. Tyler's response is that the data sources used in formulating objectives will not answer the normative question. Therefore, two screens must be used: the psychological view of learning which is favored and a philosophy of education which will help determine what the curriculum builder considers to be a "good" life, a "good" society, and a "good" person. These conceptions provide the basis for the normative judgments to be made in answering the question about what objectives or purposes the school *should* try to achieve.

Tyler would modify the rationale in two ways. First, he would make much more explicit his position that any of the four questions can be a beginning point; there is no prescribed order in which they must be considered in planning a curriculum. A second way in which he would modify the rationale is to emphasize strongly that the whole purpose of curriculum planning is the execution of the curriculum in order to improve the education a student receives. In his opinion, this means that teachers must be involved in the planning of curricula since they are the ones who must execute them. Not enough attention is paid by curriculum builders to the implementation of their planning.

Extending the Tyler Rationale

Goodlad extended the Tyler rationale by considering it at three levels of decision making: societal (national, state, and local); institutional (the individual school); and instructional (the individual teacher). Curriculum planning occurs at each of these levels and the planning done at each level has an impact upon the curriculum the student is offered. The identification of the three levels should not suggest that curricular decision making follows an orderly procedure, but it does emphasize that many people are involved in the process. Goodlad and some of his students have determined that the most neglected level of curriculum decision making is the institutional or individual school level where the total setting for learning by the students is created. Much planning has been done at the societal level and at the instructional level. In Goodlad's opinion, the individual school must become the focus for work in the years ahead.

Nongrading, one of Goodlad's major contributions, was also discussed. Goodlad and Tyler discuss how Goodlad evolved his conception of the nongraded school from experiences in teaching in a one-room school, conducting a study of what happened to a group of socially-promoted youngsters and to a group who were retained, and carrying out a study of the individual differences which exist among students in a class. These experiences led him (along with Robert H. Anderson) to become a leading proponent of the nongraded structure for school organization.[2] Tyler suggests that the traditional function of schools to sort children by grades for the labor force requirements is no longer compatible with the need for all students to get as much education as they possibly can. The schools need to organize themselves for providing maximum education to students and nongrading facilitates this.

The Schools Look Outward

If Tyler and Goodlad are accurate in their views of what American schooling is like now and should be in the future, we might look for several trends to occur. One of these is that the schools will develop an increasingly outward look. The community and society will be viewed more as companions to the school in the educative process and the problems of society will become a fundamental component of the curriculum. Several observations by the speakers seem to suggest this. Goodlad suggests that a central role of the schools in the future is to help students make sense out of the total array of experiences they are having. Tyler believes that the schools should help students develop a cognitive map for life's experiences. This means paying much more attention to what students are experiencing outside of school than we have in the past. The importance of the community as a resource to the schools is a recurring theme in the discussions. More community and citizen involvement is hoped for in providing the "stuff" of schooling. If these observations by the speakers occur to a greater extent than they have in the past, the schools will be less insulated from the community and will become more responsive to resources outside the profession.

Another way a more outward look for the schools might be inferred is that the speakers expect smoother and more natural

[2] John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson. *The Nongraded Elementary School*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.

relationships among the schools, their communities, and the world of work. This may occur for students who remain in school until their precollegiate education is completed by increasing their contacts and participation in the community. This would help solve one major problem identified as number eleven in the preceding list: the last year of high school which is a drifting year for many secondary students. Goodlad states that an examination of the curriculum reveals a modest program for many. Tyler suggests two solutions to the lack of challenge in the final year in high school. One is to engage students in action or community learning where they work a half day for pay and go to school for the other half, or in volunteer work for which no pay is received but where assistance to others such as the sick or aged is given. In this type of situation students learn to give as well as receive help. A second solution is to begin making the transition to college at an earlier age.

Closer relationships among schools, communities, and the world of work also will be brought about by students in continuing educational programs. Continuing education where citizens who have left the formal schooling process have the opportunity of returning to further their education at any time or age level will increase in importance in the future. Both speakers emphasize that schools need to help students accept the challenge of bringing their own best efforts to solving the tasks of the real world and thereby improving it. According to Tyler, this will require that students have the opportunity always to return to school for continuing education. Continuing education is seen by Goodlad as one of the real frontiers for education for the remainder of the century. In addition to increasing the outward look of schools by involving adults more and more in the schooling process, it also suggests increased need for more resources as adults come back to schools for more education.

A second future trend that might be inferred about schooling from the discussions of the speakers is that the need for change will be increasingly emphasized and the local school will be the focal point for this emphasis. Several points in the discussions suggest this. Tyler quotes the work of Gross which documented that there is more variation within a system of schools than among systems of schools. Schools are institutions which differ within a single district and changes are needed both at the local school level and at the central office level in order to recognize and foster this individuality. Tyler states that there are two bad assumptions commonly made at the district office level:

1. That the school program and instruction must be the same for all schools in the district

2. That change can be managed on a shoestring. The resources expended must be enough to make a difference and not be spread so thinly that nothing happens.

Goodlad believes that we must create the expectation that all schools within a district will *not* be treated similarly. This means that we must think through carefully what is to be decentralized and what is not to be.

Both Goodlad and Tyler discuss the difficulties of introducing an innovation into the local school. An innovation can rarely be introduced as a single entity since it will have an impact upon the system by affecting other parts which then may need modification. Also, each innovation must be studied for all its ramifications and must be understood by those dealing with it. Tyler suggests that we still have a tendency to look for fads in education or a panacea to solve our problems even though we know that human development is too complex for this simplistic notion of change. Goodlad makes the significant point that often innovations which are thought to have failed really have not; they really were never implemented.

Involvement Has Its Rewards

Tyler believes that the local school staff must be involved at all stages in any innovation and that this involvement has two values. It provides a novelty from the routine

of keeping school as it challenges the staff with a professional problem. He believes that the Hawthorne effect is a powerful stimulus to overcome the tendency to ignore professional problems which educators have. A second value of involving the staff is that it is more likely to bring the wealth of resources of the local community and home to bear on the school problems. The crucial need for asking the "right" questions by a school staff is emphasized. The "right" questions will involve the processes of examination, exploration, and experimentation and, as a result of these, there will be a basis of improvement for the school. These observations by the speakers seem to suggest that the uniqueness of each school will be recognized and attempts will be made to maximize the individuality of each school within the district. If this occurs, it will be interesting to observe the impact. For example, will parents have the option of selecting among schools with varying programs and student bodies which one their child will attend? It will almost certainly force the development of new bases for allocating resources and decision-making processes within school districts.

There are other possible trends which might be inferred from the discussions. One is that the schools will be continuing to develop programs especially for the disadvantaged youth and others with little education. Our society will become increasingly complex and those who have little opportunity to receive an education or those who for any reason cannot take full advantage of the opportunities of an education, will be able to participate in the American society to a lesser degree than they might have in the past. Our current efforts to build effective programs for these types of students will be likely to intensify. Moral and ethical education will become a high priority component of the curriculum. The current interest in value education may become strengthened and expanded. Exploration must occur of how public schools can contribute to moral

Educational Leadership Announces Themes for 1976-1977

Manuscripts and/or photographs relevant to the proposed themes for the 1976-1977 issues of *Educational Leadership* are requested. Topics and deadlines for receipt of manuscripts are as follows:

October: "Who Is Involved in Curriculum Development?" (July 1, 1976)

November: "Politics and Education—New Challenges, New Problems" (August 1, 1976)

December: "Emphasis on Staff Development" (September 1, 1976)

January: "Determining the Quality of Education" (October 1, 1976)

February: "Individualized Instruction: Another Look" (November 1, 1976)

March: "Providing for Disaffected Youth" (December 1, 1976)

April: No theme (January 1, 1977)

May: "Instructional Supervision: Trends and Issues" (February 1, 1977)

Length of manuscripts should be approximately 1800 words typed, double-spaced (about six pages). General style should conform to that of the journal. More detailed information on the technical requirements of manuscripts is available upon request from the editorial office.

Photographs and other illustrative materials, whether directly related to an article or not, are especially requested.

Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate and materials to be returned *must* be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope adequate to return material. Decisions on materials will be made as promptly as possible.

Materials should be addressed to Robert R. Leeper, Editor, *Educational Leadership*, Suite 1100, 1701 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Phone: (202) 467-6480.

education in a pluralistic society. This will not be a simple task; but it is surely an essential one for the future. There will be much closer attention given to the implementation of curricula than there has been in the past. The work of curriculum developers, which will certainly include teachers, will not be considered as finished when a written document or materials are produced. Only the first stage will have been accomplished and the second stage of tracking what happens to the curriculum when it is used by a teacher with students will be viewed as equally important as the first stage. Curriculum development may become more a local school activity than a district activity if the importance of the individual school increases as anticipated.

An Affirmation of Faith

A final possible trend that is clear from the tapes is based on the speakers' affirmation of belief in the public schools of America. Schools will remain with us; our society will not be deschooled and probably not reschooled in any dramatic and sudden way. Goodlad rejects the notion that we ought to get rid of our schools and start all over again. His opinion is that we probably would rebuild them in a similar fashion tomorrow. Tyler states that the schools have been successful in the past because citizens have cooperated in improving education. In this remains the hope for the future of education. We, the citizens, must recognize the problems, be concerned with them, and provide the resources for resolving them. The public school as a social institution will be retained and the schools will continue to have some successes and to confront some of the problems facing them today.

The program, "Dialogue on American Education," consists of a set of four cassette tapes and a guidebook which contains a brief description of the program, biographical information about the speakers, a short summary of each cassette, and a selected bibliography of each speaker's works. It is available from Media/West, P.O. Box 92999, Los Angeles, California 90009. The discussions on the tapes are slow-paced, informal, and sprinkled generously with how each speaker has been involved personally in the development of and how he has used the concepts under consideration with school faculties.

There are some limitations to this program which ought to be recognized. One is that the content of some of the tapes is limited basically to the authors' contributions to the field and is not a comprehensive discussion of all the ideas available on the topic. For example, only the Tyler rationale for curriculum planning is discussed; other approaches to curriculum planning are not included. Also, the nongraded school is the only major idea on school organization presented; others are not included.

A second limitation is that there would certainly be other views on some of the topics included on the tapes and this is not acknowledged specifically in the discussions. For example, Tyler cites as one major accomplishment of American schooling the fact that so many diverse people were educated for citizenship. Minority groups are becoming increasingly vocal about their objections to the way in which this was done in the past and is being done in some places today. The speakers should certainly be commended for presenting their views on the accomplishments and problems in public education. It is a great strength of the program. The listener should be aware, however, that there may well be dissenting views on both the accomplishments and the issues.

The reviewer highly recommends this set of tapes to those interested in a broad perspective on the public schools. The tapes provide a long range and expanded view of schooling and education in America by two distinguished educators. The program qualifies as a contribution to the bicentennial celebration worthy of consideration by educators and all interested citizens. Two hundred years of public schooling have made a significant and, for the most part, a positive difference in the lives of many Americans. Perhaps over the next 200 years, we can increase that positive impact upon the lives of *all* American citizens. □

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