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The Miami University (Ohio) Story

By Jan Kettlewell

Introduction

For the past three years, Miami University (Ohio), in partnership with 11 area schools and affiliated health and human services agencies, has been developing what is called the Institute for Educational Renewal. As it continues to develop, the Institute is both a concept and a setting that is premised upon the related assumptions that: (1) Miami University and its partner school communities share responsibilities for improving outcomes for children, youth, families, and communities; (2) In order to improve outcomes, renewal and change must be planned in partnership, mindful of the interdependence and need to synchronize changes each partner needs to make; (3) Every faculty member, practicing professional, and student can and should make contributions to this effort (there is enough work for everyone); and (4) All partners need to embrace and model participatory-

democratic principles and processes in their work.

The Institute for Educational Renewal, Based at Miami University

The Institute for Educational Renewal represents a consortium of partnerships that seeks to bring together the school, community, and the university to the advantage of children and families in partner school communities and persons whose careers are in service to children and families. The mission of the Institute for Educational Renewal is to renew the capacity of schools, families, health, social service agencies, and Miami University to exercise shared responsibility for the learning, development, and well-being of all children, youth, and families. The primary goals of the Institute are to:

1. Improve the education of educators, health, and social service professionals.
2. Improve education, health, and social services for children, youth, and families.
3. Support the development and renewal of individuals—university, school, health, agency personnel, and families.
4. Support development and renewal of organizations, including inter-organizational relationships.
5. Support inquiry—assessment, critique, evaluation, research.

The foundational principles of the Institute for Educational Renewal set forth a new vision for education, health, and social service systems and for children and families. It is both child- and family-centered and intended to promote collaboration among systems. The foundational principles are as follows:

- ⇒ This work is grounded in personal and organizational commitments to children, youth, and families.
- ⇒ Parents, caregivers, and education, health, and human service professionals must have ongoing opportunities to work together to enhance the learning, development, and well being of all children.
- ⇒ All students (partner school community students and Miami University students) must have access to education and services based on research and current best practices.
- ⇒ Differences in the success of anyone—children, preservice students or the personnel of Miami University and partner school communities—cannot be associated with race, class, or gender. An environment must be provided that is conducive to the continual development of understanding, sensitivity, and respect for ethnic, linguistic, social, cultural, and individual learning differences.
- ⇒ A climate for airing differences and building shared understandings of current best practices for the learning and well-being of children must be created, including the readiness needs of adults and organizations toward the same goal.

- ⇒ Members of the Institute (teachers, administrators, Miami University faculty and students, agency professionals, parents) must regularly invest time and other resources in inquiry and renewal—generating questions, developing answers, reviewing research and current best practices, and reflecting together on the needs of the learners.
- ⇒ It must be understood that change is difficult but possible, and necessary, and that the push for change must allow for self-learning to unfold.

Current Focus and Aegis of the Institute

While participants in the Institute for Educational Renewal aspire for it to become a true community of partnerships, at the present time it is legitimate to ask whether the Institute is internal or external to Miami. At present it is both. It is a community of partnerships, which is under the leadership of Miami University, and it serves as what John I. Goodlad calls a Center of Pedagogy.

The Institute is grounded in the 19 postulates, or necessary conditions of programs for the education of educators, that resulted from the five year study of teacher education programs conducted by Goodlad and his colleagues through the Center for Educational Renewal, based at the University of Washington. At the cornerstone of this research is the pre-eminence of the academic discipline in which a future teacher is specializing. Goodlad calls for strengthening basic theoretical and conceptual understanding of education; strengthening conceptual connections among liberal education, specialized subject matter, foundational studies, and applied methods and practice teaching; and strengthening connections with the world of practice. Goodlad stresses that the mission of teacher education must be connected to the mission of schooling in a democratic society, and should feature four curricular themes: enculturating the young in a social and political democracy, providing access to knowledge for all children and youth, practicing pedagogical nurturing, and ensuring responsible stewardship of schools (*Educational Renewal*, pp. 4-5).

In *Educational Renewal* (1994), **Goodlad defines a center of pedagogy “as both a concept and a setting”** (p. 10). **As a concept**, it is “inquiry focused,” where the art and science of teaching are brought to bear on the education of educators and where the whole of the teacher education program is the subject of continuous inquiry (p. 11). **As a setting**, it encompasses within its borders faculty members from education, the arts and sciences, and partner schools, and serves as what Goodlad calls “an organizational identity” for the preparation of educators (p. 13). Through what Goodlad calls the tripartite collaboration of faculty (from education, the arts and sciences, and partner schools) in inquiry and in programs for the education of educators, the purpose of a center of pedagogy is to promote the simultaneous renewal of schools and programs for the education of educators. Thus, based upon Goodlad’s research, as envisioned the Institute for Educational Renewal is both a concept and setting through which Miami University exercises

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its responsibility for inquiry and ongoing renewal of schools and programs for the education of educators. But, there is more.

As important as Goodlad's research is to shaping the Institute for Educational Renewal, based at Miami University, another powerful body of literature as well as a historical context has also been influential. This body of literature, known as Interprofessional Collaboration and Service Integration, is best represented by Katharine Hooper-Briar and Hal Lawson, colleagues from Miami University. Drawing upon this literature, within the Institute the simultaneous renewal of schools has been approached in relation to the other systems that are intended to serve children, youth, and families, and the renewal of programs for the education of educators is in relation to other university programs for health and social service providers. Hooper-Briar and Lawson argue that relational analysis and development invite us to proceed beyond the comfortable confines of school-university cooperation to multi-dimensional partnerships (university, school, health/social service agencies, community, families) that impact on the life spaces of children and youth.

This Institute for Educational Renewal, thus, is developing upon two different, and yet related, bodies of literature. The first is that of Goodlad and his colleagues in the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington; the second is a recently emerging field, best represented by Lawson and Hooper-Briar, that addresses schools in relation to other systems in our society that serve children, youth, and families, with the related implications for professional preparation programs in universities. Goodlad's research is based upon a five year study of teacher education programs which is presented in *Teachers for our Nation's Schools* (as well as his earlier research on K-12 schools, as reported in *A Place Called School*). The research of Hooper-Briar and Lawson, funded by The Danforth Foundation, is based upon site visits and interviews of interprofessional collaboration and service integration in 25 different states, as most recently reported in two monographs, *Serving Children, Youth, Families and Communities: A Guide for Interprofessional Collaboration and Service Integration* (1994) and *Interprofessional Collaboration and Service Integration: Implications for Colleges and Universities* (1994).

For all kinds of historical reasons, Miami University's "Education School" has been a School of Education and Allied Professions in which programs are featured in Education, Family and Consumer Sciences, with strong faculty interest in family studies; and Health, Physical Education, and Sport Studies, with strong faculty interest in health. Effective Fall 1994, the Social Work Program has moved into the School of Education and Allied Professions and a new Department of Family Studies and Social Work has been created. This composition and collective expertise of the faculty in Miami's School of Education and Allied Professions, together with a growing sense of frustration about the ever worsening societal conditions for children, youth, and families and the inability of our various

systems—as stand-alone institutions—to have much impact on these conditions, have been the most critical variables in shaping the development of, and aspirations for, the Institute for Educational Renewal.

During the Fall of 1994, Miami University faculty, together with colleagues in partner schools and partner agencies, developed a consensus document that focuses on “pieces” of all five goals of the Institute for Educational Renewal. The document, entitled the *Institute for Educational Renewal*, was recently approved for funding by Goodlad (from the Dewitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund) and represents some “set directions,” as well as full recognition that what is described is a journey, not a fixed destination. As noted earlier, the Institute is envisioned as both a concept and a setting.

Institute for Educational Renewal—As a Concept

As a concept, the Institute is not a static, bureaucratic structure imposed upon participants. To the contrary, it must be constructed—and continuously re-constructed—by its participants. Like the change processes and projects it is designed to facilitate, the Institute must be viewed as an inventive, self-corrective, developmental, consumer-guided, and data-driven organization. Like Goodlad’s Center for Pedagogy, there are no working models to imitate. Committing to the creation and continuous construction of the Institute is pioneering work.

As envisioned, the Institute is intended as a strategic resource, a renewal and change-oriented catalyst. As a change and capacity building focal point, the Institute is an innovation in itself. It represents a test of the most effective ways to support faculty, students, and diverse partners in school communities in a collaborative venture to improve practice and outcomes.

A cornerstone of the Institute for Educational Renewal is inquiry. Part of that understanding of the nature of inquiry includes assessment. Assessment will focus on collective and individual self-study that will encompass a broad range of information-gathering activities and persons. As suggested by the phrase “learning our way through the change process” (Cox, 1993), assessment, like change, involves learning. The target audiences for assessment are the same persons who are involved in the innovations and gathering the information. In this perspective, the creation of this partnership, and the striving toward the mission of renewing the capacity of schools, families, health/social service agencies, and Miami University to exercise shared responsibility for the learning, development and well-being of all children, youth, and families require an assessment philosophy that allows participating persons, groups, and organizations to learn about themselves, each other, and about change-as-learning.

Institute for Educational Renewal—As a Setting

In addition to being a concept, the Institute will also function as a setting in the

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Goodladian sense, with one of its primary purposes being to promote the simultaneous renewal of schools, in relation to the renewal of other systems that are intended to serve children, youth, and families, and the renewal of programs for the education of educators in relation to selected university programs for health and human service providers, namely family studies and social work, and programs that feature health enhancement and education.

Goodlad's four moral dimensions of teaching, noted previously, will frame the work in the Institute for Educational Renewal as a setting. The Institute for Educational Renewal will serve as an organizational identity for bringing together faculty from the School of Education and Allied Professions and College of Arts and Sciences (within Miami University), partner schools, and partner agencies to collectively share responsibility for the preparation of educators, health, and family service professionals. The purpose will be to promote the learning and well being of children and families through assuming the collective responsibility for the simultaneous renewal of the partner schools, partner agencies, and Miami University's programs for the preparation of educators, health, and human service professionals. The Institute is not, however, about curriculum redesign followed by business as usual. Rather, through the Institute it is anticipated that all members will share in the responsibility for ongoing renewal and coherence of the programs. Consistent with Goodlad's postulates, it is intended that the curricular redesign and overall coherence of preparation programs will belong to the collective membership of the Institute, with all members sharing a sense of collective responsibility for modeling effective pedagogy and professional practices.

Why the Institute for Educational Renewal At This Time?

There is growing recognition that all of our systems—schools, health and social service agencies, colleges and universities, business and corporations, governments, and others—require continuous monitoring if they are to react to, and anticipate changes in the world around us. Participants in the Institute for Educational Renewal have learned about the difficulties associated with change, and have gained an understanding about the necessary conditions for it to occur. They also know about the dangers of pursuing change for its own sake. Thus, participants in the Institute seek ways to enhance readiness for change, their abilities to make these changes and, where necessary and warranted, to resist changes that may be harmful. The concept of renewal allows for participants to consider the self-oriented and self-directed learning and inquiry, that individuals, groups and organizations undertake in relation to their needs, readiness, and capacities for change. The Institute for Educational Renewal is an organizational facilitator for this.

All partners in the Institute for Educational Renewal are concerned about the unfortunate and intolerable outcomes documented in a growing number of chil-

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dren, youth, families, and communities. All know about the challenges—even crises—professionals are confronting in schools, health and human services agencies, governments, and higher education institutions. In all cases, partners share concern about the ways in which these outcomes and conditions can be improved. All know that their lives and the lives of others will be made better as such improvements are made. In brief, self-interest and altruism merge here. Professional and citizenship roles become interdependent, founded upon the civic, moral and ethical obligations.

Renewal revolves around the individual and collective commitments and obligations to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families and the conditions surrounding that work. The Institute for Educational Renewal is one way—not the only way—to mobilize individuals, groups and organizations for the challenges of change. Renewing and changing together is difficult without such a mediating structure and processes. Mindful of the interdependence of higher education institutions, schools, and community health and human services agencies, there is a need to renew and change simultaneously and together. Each partner needs, and depends upon, the others. In recognition of this, the Institute brings together all interested parties to plan for our simultaneous, interactive renewal and change.

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