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Returning to the Origin of Education, the Eternal Theme of Educational Reform:
In Memory of Professor John Goodlad and His Educational Era

一个称为学校的地方 (苏智欣, 胡玲, 陈建华译) [*A place called school* (Su Zhixin, Hu Lin, & Chen Jianhua, Trans.)]. 约翰·I·古德拉 [John I. Goodlad]. 上海, 中国: 华东师范大学出版社 [Shanghai, China: East China Normal University Press], 2004. 455pp. (paperback), ¥46, ISBN: 978-7-56-174481-9.

We sadly learned the news that Professor John I. Goodlad passed away in Seattle on November 29, 2014. We feel deep regret over his passing. Although we never met Professor Goodlad, we read his famous book *A Place Called School*, which inspired us greatly. We won the bid to host the XVI World Congress of Comparative Education Societies in 2016. With inspiration from this book as well as some large-scale in-depth investigation, we plan to make a panoramic introduction to the operational logic behind Chinese schools and the challenges they face from a student's admission to school until their graduation. For this purpose, we specially wrote a letter to consult the non-profit organization Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI), set up by Professor Goodlad in Seattle in 1992. Although we failed to find the original material of *A Place Called School*, we received a detailed reply from Paula McMannon and learned that Professor Goodlad was 94 years old and in poor health. But we were shocked at to hear the bad news so soon after that.

Professor Goodlad, a well-known contemporary American scholar, was born in 1920 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. In 1949, he earned his doctor's degree from the University of Chicago. Goodlad served on the faculty at University of Chicago, University of California at Los Angeles, and University of Washington and he set up the famous Center for Educational Renewal at University of Washington (CER) and the American Education Institute. He was dean of the Graduate School, Education College, University of California at Los Angeles for 16 years. He focused on school reform and teacher education, and had more than 30 publications, such as *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*, *Places Where Teachers Are Taught* and 80 book chapters and more than 200 academic papers. His best known book, *A Place Called School*, first published in 1984, received the Outstanding Book of

the Year Award from the American Educational Research Association and the Distinguished Book of the Year Award from Kappa Delta Pi. He also received that AERA's Award for Distinguished Contributions to Educational Research.

A Place Called School is famous not only because of its large scale, multi-dimensional design and detailed data. More important is that Goodlad and his team offer keen insight and profound and far-sighted judgment about American school education. For the first time Goodlad described the “grammar rules” of American school education like an American, which are American school education's basic conception, practice, daily operation and the real state of mind of people involved in the operation (Preface, p. 1). He frankly talked about America's education problems of that time, for example: “We use test scores, such as those on the SAT, as though they tell us something about the condition of schools. They tell us even less about schools than a thermometer designed to measure body temperature tells us about body health” (p. 14). On the basis of plentiful research, he proposed “a community towards education” (p. 375). “For many people, it is unbelievable to seek to set up an educational community and educational society overstepping the existing school... However, creating the future starts with changing the present situation” (p. 383). Although we do not know how much *A Place Called School* affects *A Nation at Risk*, the most important policy report in America education field in 1980s, Theodore R.Sizer explicitly points out that *A Nation at Risk* depicts a particular period, and *A Place Called School* describes long-term policy.

Professor Goodlad and his book *A Place Called School* not only affect the reform and development of American education since 1980s. In fact, it also opened up an era of education reform with “improve education quality” as its theme. The United States, Britain, Germany, Russia, Japan, South Korea, including China, have issued all kinds of important decisions on education reform, such as Japan's third education reform act of 1984; Britain's *The Education Reform Act 1988*; The Soviet Union's *Basic Principles for the Reform of Ordinary Schools and Vocational Schools of the Soviet Union* in 1984; The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China's *Decisions about Education System Reform* in 1985. Although the Chinese version of *A Place Called School* was not published until 2004 on the Chinese mainland, Goodlad's educational thoughts have been discussed in China since the 1980s. In our view,

Professor Goodlad and his book *A Place Called School* have become a symbol of the education era.

Nowadays, with the rapid development of globalization and informatization, China is facing a new wave of education reform, from the *National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Outline (2010–2020)* issued in 2010 to the strategy entitled *Deepening Education Reform Comprehensively* decided at the Third Plenary session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Almost all of China's education policy makers, education researchers and practitioners have put the focus of reform on schools and called for a return to “a place called school” and “returning to the origin of education.” However, what is the “origin of education”? What is the function of the school? As far as we are concerned, the origin of education is to cultivate people; a school is a place to inherit culture, to create knowledge, to cultivate talents and to promote human development. The “educational community” put forward by Professor Goodlad is actually a description of a good educational environment. We also advocate that education is a form of social engineering which needs the support and efforts of the whole society. By way of this review, we commemorate Professor Goodlad and *A Place Called School*, and celebrate and welcome this era of returning to the origin of education.

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