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ABSTRACT

This report investigates the relationship between the philosophy of John Dewey and the founding of the two-year General College of the University of Minnesota. Originally designated "The Junior College of the University of Minnesota", the college was established in response to the diverse needs and abilities of the new student population which emerged during the early 1930's. The report demonstrates that the philosophy of the General College, as expressed in polity statements, attitudes, and practices of the faculty and administration during the college's first six years, was heavily influenced by the ideas of Dewey. The first part of the report is a brief explanation of Dewey's theory of individual growth and development and the manner in which this theory, according to Dewey, should be applied in the educational process. This is followed by an inspection of the philosophy of the General College as manifested by the various policy commitments and curriculum procedures adopted by the college. Each curriculum area is examined in relation to Dewey's philosophy. The vast extent of Dewey's influence is shown, even though Dewey's name does not appear in any of the documents relating to the founding of the college. A General College Bibliography and selected Dewey Bibliography are appended. (Author/AH)

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The Influence of John Dewey's Philosophy on the Founding of the General College

By Elvin O. Balkcum

Though the General College was founded over four decades ago, a definitive history of its role and mission in the University of Minnesota has yet to be written. Anyone curious about why the College was begun, for instance, or about how the vicissitudes of time have modified its original structure, will find it necessary to consult many disparate sources, published and unpublished. Though the essay which comprises this issue of The General College Studies is not a comprehensive history, it is an attempt to elucidate one element in the founding of the College. In that sense, it might be regarded as an introduction to a history of the General College.

The initial impetus for this report was provided by a graduate course in educational philosophy in which the author was enrolled in the spring of 1974. Through his study of American pragmatism, Mr. Balkcum became aware of the pervasive influence of John Dewey on the educational climate of the 1930's. Since he was, at that time, a teaching associate in the General College, Mr. Balkcum began to investigate the relationship, if any, between Deweyan thought and the factors that led to the founding of the General College. From that investigation, the project grew to the study presented here.

Readers of this essay will find that its bibliography lists most of what is available in print about the early days of the General College. Unpublished sources consulted by Mr. Balkcum include documents in the University archives, minutes of many GC faculty meetings, and the personal papers of University educators who figured prominently in the early life of the College. Aside from written sources, Mr. Balkcum profited from information obtained through personal interviews with people still associated with the College: Dean Alfred L. Vaughan, for instance, and Professors Norman Moen, Dewain Long, Leon Reisman, and Candido Zanoni.

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By Elvin O. Balkcum

In the early 1930's, as a result of the severe economic depression in the United States, colleges and universities across the nation found themselves in an unusual and disturbing situation. Because of the depressed state of the economy, financial resources were depleted, alumni could no longer contribute money, and hundreds of thousands of families who would ordinarily have enrolled their children in institutions of higher education could no longer afford the expense of tuition and fees. As a result, colleges and universities were forced to lower entrance requirements and to establish plans for financial assistance in order to provide opportunities for more students to enroll. Various government programs of financial assistance were made available to both students and institutions. While these developments gradually alleviated the financial burden of many schools, they created, at the same time, a new problem. Many young people who normally would have entered the job market upon graduation from high school found themselves among the massive ranks of the unemployed. Since jobs were so scarce, and since the expenses of higher education could now be met in some way, increasing numbers of young people enrolled in colleges and universities. As a result, college populations began to swell with individuals of a widening range of abilities and interests. But many of these young people were ill-equipped to profit from traditional college programs designed to produce scholars and research workers. Most college curriculums were either on the pre-professional level, such as law or medicine, or they centered on programs preparing students for graduate study. As a result, such fields as mathematics, philosophy, literature, art, and the natural and social sciences were technical and highly specialized. Hence, while students were coming to college in increasing numbers, they also were dropping out in increasing numbers.

As Malcolm MacLean, looking back at the 1930's, points out, the problems encountered by depression-era students in Minnesota soon became apparent. As this new diversity of students was admitted to the University, they "ran head on into the rigid, traditional standards of academia which sooner or later bucked more than half of them back into a cold and jobless world. The problem of student fallout, dropout and kick-out was acute at Minnesota."[1]

But even among the students who did remain and complete their college work, many were not satisfied with the experience. Various studies showed that many students who completed a four-year curriculum could equally well have been served by a two-year program.[2] Many graduates felt that they had been led to prepare for a profession that they were not well suited to take up. But most alarming was evidence which indicated that most students left college ill-prepared for the intense, full-time occupation of living.

The university may have given them a certain technical expertise in a profession, but it had failed to give them successful guidance concerning their development as individuals, family members, and citizens of the community. They had been taught how to work at a job but not how to live an active, meaningful life.

Such statistics and findings made it evident that many students were not being given the kinds of educational opportunities to which their abilities and interests seemed to entitle them. Do young people in a democracy have the right to expect institutions of higher learning to provide for their needs? According to Lotus Delta Coffman, president of the University of Minnesota in 1933, the University indeed did have a responsibility to these students.

> The problem was not one of exclusion, not at the University of Minnesota. It should not be . . . at any institution that conceives its task in terms of the twentieth century and with due regard to all the individual differences that still must find in education common denominators for the citizenship of a democracy. Indeed, an educational system that even in its highest reaches seeks to give every student the fullest and richest opportunities to which his ability and his considered purposes entitle him is itself the highest expression of democracy.[3]

It was such a sense of responsibility that caused the University of Minnesota in the 1930's to look for and experiment with new programs which it hoped would be better suited to meet the needs of its students. The search for new programs, for the most part, centered on what was commonly called "general education." While there were many opinions about what specific procedures and practices characterized general education, educational theorists seemed to agree that it should attempt to establish some sort of unity in educational subject matter. As a reaction against rigid programs which emphasize specialization, general education emphasized survey and orientation-type courses as the core of its curriculum.

Considerations such as these led President Coffman in 1930 to establish a "Committee on University Reorganization," called for short, "The Committee of Seven." In the fall of 1931, as a result of the deliberations and recommendations of this committee, came a directive from President Coffman establishing what he called "a new college experiment in general education," to begin in the fall of 1932. The experiment consisted of the establishment of a new unit, designated "The Junior College of the University of Minnesota." Malcolm S. MacLean was selected to be its first director. (Later the name of the unit was changed to "The General College".)

My intent in this paper is to demonstrate that the philosophy of the General College as expressed in policy statements, attitudes, and practices of the faculty and administration during the first six years of the College's existence was heavily influenced by the ideas of John Dewey. Part I of this paper is a brief explanation of Dewey's theory of individual growth and development and the manner in which this theory, according to Dewey, should be applied in the educative process. In Part II, I will demonstrate the philosophy of the General College as seen through the various policy commitments and curriculum procedures adopted by the college. I will attempt to show that this philosophy and its resulting practical applications were very similar in nature to the theory and practices advocated by Dewey, even though Dewey's name does not appear in any of the documents related to the founding of the General College.

Part I

According to Dewey, an individual is born possessing a stock of innate impulses which take the form of tendencies toward, capacities for, and interests in, the performance of certain types of behavior. The child's social environment molds and develops his disposition for behavior by engaging him in activities which arouse and strengthen certain of his capacities. A child growing up in a family of musicians, for instance, will have whatever capacities he has in music stimulated and developed more than other impulses which might have been awakened in another environment. But regardless of what social environment the individual is in, there will result some participation in activity through which society serves the child as an educative influence. Depending upon the goals and interests of the group involved, certain actions and objects are to be valued, while others are disvalued. In this manner the child is given direction and guidance in his behavior. Certain social groups and certain ways of life call attention to particular sets of facts about the world, which in turn encourage the individual to develop and expand selected capacities that lead him to pursue certain occupations. If the individual had been exposed to a different way of life, to a different set of facts about the world, he most likely would have been encouraged to develop other capacities and other occupations.

An individual's capacities are not developed simply by calling them to his attention. They develop and take on meaning for him through a process of active participation in activities within the social environment. Thus, an individual learns about what he is capable of doing by actually doing things. He comes to understand the meaning and significance of his actions by doing them with, and in the presence of, others in the society. By the responses others make to his actions, he comes to know what the actions mean socially. Society, through its habits, customs, and technology, establishes the meanings of events occurring in the society. The individual

learns these meanings by becoming actively involved in the affairs of society. He knows the meanings of events when he knows the conditions which cause them and the consequences to which they lead. Hence, by sharing everyday affairs with his family and community, the individual gradually develops his own talents and gains insight and understanding into the meanings of events happening in society. He thus begins to develop an individual personality and comes to identify himself through his relationships with others. In this manner, the society performs a major portion of the educative process.

But in a large and complex society, the accumulation of valuable knowledge and experience is so abundant that the individual in his everyday social activities does not have the opportunity to experience them all directly. In order to insure that all of its resources are made available to the young, society establishes a special agency, the school. To the school is delegated the responsibility of effectively bringing the young to share in all the inherited knowledge and experience of the society. It takes up and expands the activities with which the young are already involved in the home and in the community.

Dewey views the educative process as a process of doing, rather than as an activity of instruction. "Education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process."[4] An individual learns by actually taking part in activities with other members of his group. The school, therefore, has the task of getting its students involved in social activities. But getting the students to participate in activities with others is not itself a problem, for, according to Dewey, man is by nature a social animal. At times, people are no doubt interested in having their own way, "But they are also interested, and chiefly interested upon the whole, in entering into the activities of others and taking part in conjoint and cooperative doings".[5] The individual must be given the opportunity to come into contact with activities, but once such opportunity has been provided, he will by nature want to become involved. The more difficult task lies in the selection of activities which will profit the student, and this selection is one of the main functions delegated to the school.

The school must provide the child with what Dewey calls "educative experiences." These experiences call for the child to act upon some problem or task and then allow him to share with others in the consequences of the act. The experience must encourage the child to think reflectively. Reflective thinking is held by Dewey to be something similar to a practical implementation of the scientific method in everyday problems and tasks. It is associating actions with their causes and consequences. The aim of such experiences is not to show the student how to perform specific tasks or solve particular problems, but rather to assist him in developing habits and interests which will give him a general disposition geared to problem solving and task performing. The experiences must be flexible so that each child can develop his own way of dealing with life problems. Since each child enters life with a different set of tendencies, each child will develop a

different way of dealing with problems. In problem solving, the individual comes to learn the significance and the potential of his own abilities. As the natural capacities develop and grow within the context of shared experiences, the individual should come to know who he is and to understand better what he can do.

Two essential factors are being united in Dewey's educative process. First, the child brings with him to all experience his own interests, instincts, and capacities which furnish the basis for his growth. Second, these interests and capacities must operate within a social environment which gives meaning to the child's tendencies. Though the child's talents potentially exist, they have no significance or meaning for him until they can be translated into social equivalents. Growth and development, then, consist of learning how to use one's natural talents for social purposes.

> Education, therefore, must recognize each individual's natural talents and give them social meaning and purpose. Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by references to these same considerations. These powers, interests, and habits must be continually interpreted--we must know what they mean. They must be translated in terms of their social equivalents--into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service.[6]

According to Dewey, the key to the educative process is the social environment. If society can control the environment, it can successfully guide the young through the process of individual growth. This process is the primary task for the school. It must recreate the student's environment in such a way that he is stimulated to develop his natural abilities. But the social environment the child encounters in his home and community is far too complex and too disjointed for him to adjust to it on his own and to grow and develop within it. Certain alterations must be made in the environment to make it palatable to young, undeveloped personalities. Dewey regards these alterations to the environment as the three functions of formal education. These functions are to simplify the environment, to eliminate undesirable features in the environment, and to balance and coordinate the various aspects of the environment.

With respect to the first function, Dewey says that

> Existing life is so complex that the child cannot be brought into contact with it without either confusion or distraction; he is either overwhelmed by the multiplicity of activities which are going on, so that he loses his own power of orderly reaction, or he is so stimulated by these various activities that his powers are prematurely called into play and he becomes either unduly specialized or else disintegrated.[7]

The school must select from among life's experiences the most fundamental features and establish a progressive order of experience. These fundamental features are used by the child as building blocks upon which he develops into what is more complicated. Gradually, the young person comes to acquire a working understanding of the complexities of society. Secondly, Dewey maintains that, "Everyone gets encumbered with what is positively perverse. The school has the duty of omitting such things from the environment which it supplies, and thereby doing what it can to counteract this influence in the ordinary social environment."[8] Finally, Dewey states that,

> One code prevails in the family, another, on the street, a third in the workshop or store, a fourth in the religious association. As a person passes from one of the environments to another, he is subjected to antagonistic pulls, and is in danger of being split into a being having different standards of judgement and emotion for different occasions. This danger imposes upon the school a steadying and integrating office.[9]

In short, the individual must become a citizen who should be able to cope with and meaningfully serve in the complex society in which he is a member.

Along with balancing for the individual the social elements he comes into contact with, the school must also serve to broaden his scope of experience. By presenting various environments, the school gives the individual the opportunity to escape from the limitations of his social group. This opportunity tends to make the individual more flexible and better prepared to deal with unique tasks and problems, and it expands his natural talents into new areas.

According to Dewey, the aforementioned three functions must be taken into consideration by the school when it is preparing subject matter. They form the criteria by which the order and selection of experiences should be presented to the students. Growth and development in the child consist of his learning to deal meaningfully with the environment in his own terms by means of a gradual process of unifying social experiences. The method of instruction adopted by the school should be one of engaging its students in active participation in experiences. The school must present meaningful experiences so that students can actively share in their operations and consequences. A meaningful experience is an educative experience, one which tends to develop in the individual habits and dispositions which will encourage him to further growth. According to Dewey, growth is more than simply a preparation for future living; it is, in fact, living itself. To live is to grow and develop. "Our net conclusion is that life is development, and that developing, growing, is life."[10] Since this process of growth and development is real life, schools should present real-life experiences,

and these experiences should tend to promote continued growth and development. Hence, the goal of education is itself; it is its own end.

From the preceding account of Dewey's thought, one can identify four main elements which, taken together, express its spirit. First, according to Dewey, education is a process and, as such, it is constantly changing. As life problems change, so will education. It is for this reason that education requires constant experimentation and reorganization. As Dewey says, "the educational process is one of continued reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming".[11] William Kilpatrick, speaking about Dewey's own school, states that,

> Teachers, then as now, must be always learning ever better how to run a school. There is no end to the experimenting, and so no end to the learning. Never can insight quite ca[illegible] up with life's ever emerging problems. Life is like that. Study must go on forev[illegible] he Dewey school was alive with study.[12]

The school must constantly re-examine the child and the society in which he lives in order to keep up with his changing needs and problems and their solution. It should be experimental and flexible in its programs, and it should be constantly involved in self-analysis.

The second element of Dewey's thought is that the institution must take as its primary concern the individual wants, needs, and interests of its students. According to Dewey, the beginning point for all education must be individual capacities, abilities, and interests. Dewey's last two elements concern subject matter and modes of instruction. As noted, Dewey considers education to be a process of living and not simply a preparation for future living. Hence, education must represent real life, and educational institutions must present real life experiences as subject matter. Finally, as a method of instruction, the institution must actively engage its students in activities with the subject matter. According to Dewey, since education is a process of doing, students must actively share with others the doing and the consequences of relevant activities.

The four elements pointed out are so fundamental to Dewey's thinking that they would appear to be essential to any educational institution influenced by Dewey's ideas. Dewey's four elements were evident, for instance, in the numerous kindergarten and grade school experiments which sprang up as a result of the innovative program at Dewey's own Laboratory School in Chicago. The e aspects were also evident at Bennington and Sarah Lawrence Colleges, established in the mid-twenties, both clearly influenced by Dewey's thought. I should like to show how these elements were present in the considerations which led to the establishment of the General College and how they manifested themselves in the philosophy and curriculum of the College during its first few years.

Part II

University of Minnesota President Coffman became interested in the establishment of the General College for two reasons:

> One, to provide for the study of individual abilities, interests and potentialities of a very considerable number of young people whose needs were not being met elsewhere in the University; and second, to experiment with a new program of instruction, a program which involves the revamping, re-organizing, and re-evaluation of materials of instruction with a view to familiarizing students more with the world in which they are to live. . . an educational program which will serve the students who desire to come face to face with problems upon which they must exercise judgement later.[13]

The General College then, from its very inception, was an experimental institution. It was brought into existence precisely because the traditional educational programs were inappropriate for a large portion of the University population. Many of the deans of the University and President Coffman recognized the need for a different approach to dealing with the "non-traditional" segment of the student population. They also realized that the University did not, at that time, possess sufficient knowledge about its students or about society at large to establish a large general education program.

For these reasons, the College was begun on a modest basis with the intent of carrying on extensive research into the wants, needs, and abilities of its students. Obviously, it had to be experimental and it had to be flexible. The original curriculum was comprised of only eighteen courses, many of which were non-traditional and controversial in content and approach to subject matter. The establishment of the program was accompanied step-by-step with surveys, studies, and research in order to determine the effectiveness of the course offerings. Hundreds of hours of counseling were devoted to students as the College attempted to understand who the students were and how they could be helped toward happy, meaningful, and productive lives.[14] As the results of many studies became known, the College made additions to, deletions from, and emendations in its original program. Studies were continued over the next four decades; as society and student needs changed, so too did the General College. It was willing to give up courses and areas of study when they proved ineffective and eager to expand to new areas when student demand called for it.

The College experimented with bringing together areas of study traditionally kept separate. The curriculum freely crossed lines of subject

matter to draw together disparate elements in order to help students form a coherent unity. Home life courses, for instance, drew from and were complemented by relevant aspects of psychology and the sciences in order to present a clear and accurate picture of various relationships in the home. Economics was blended into subjects such as history and government, as well as the natural sciences, in an approach relevant to the activities of contemporary society. Courses in vocational orientation drew freely from almost all areas to give the student a full and accurate view of the possibilities and limitations of the job market. Contemporary affairs and social problems from the perspective of contemporary books and periodicals were introduced as topics for critical reading in literature and writing courses. These are just a few examples from among the many attempts to fuse areas of study. Such course offerings were in contrast to the highly secularized "departments"maintained at other more traditional institutions of higher education.

The College experimented not only with subject matter but with methods of teaching as well. Malcolm MacLean, as Director of the College for eight years, repeatedly encouraged faculty members to establish closer relationships with their students in order to make the faculty more aware of and more responsive to the wants and needs of the students. Such an attitude obviously led to more student participation in the educative process. Many instructors substituted or alternated the traditional lecture format with innovative techniques, such as small group discussion classes led by teaching assistants and honor students, public and student guest speakers with practical knowledge of the subject matter, workshop and laboratories in which special interests and individual problems could be dealt with on an individual basis, and extensive use of many newly developed audio-visual aids. All of this experimentation was carried out in order to find new ways to make the College more efficient and effective in instructing students in how to deal with life's problems.

Underlying the College's procedures was the assumption that each student brought with him a unique set of desires, needs, and abilities. In a 1932 report, the Committee of Seven fully recognized that these factors should be respected:

> Students vary in their needs and abilities. . . no one profits by attempting the same college task, at the same pace, or by the same methods as everyone else. . . We seek the only true democracy that should prevail in education, and that is the fullest and richest opportunity for every student to obtain the training to which he is entitled after a careful consideration of his needs and abilities.[15]

This same report goes on to state that the General College was established as a "contribution to our constant effort to give some recognition to individual differences and needs, despite the overwhelming number of students with whom we have to deal."[16] The same philosophy was voiced by Director MacLean over and over again throughout his career as College Director. The focus of education in the General College, he said, "should be based on the needs, interests, and desires, present and future, of individual students rather than upon any preconceived notion of what may be good for them."[17]

The concern for individual needs and instruction, and continuing changes in society as well as in students, maintained the experimental status of the General College from its inception. As Director MacLean said,

> Only by the continuing analysis of student abilities, aptitudes, interests, skills, achievements, motives, and other personality factors, conditioned by interaction with their college, home, social, work and civic environments, can we identify their common and their unique needs and so shape curriculums in general education to meet them.[18]

The founders of the General College recognized that education must take into account the complex and often conflicting social relationships that students face, and that it must prepare the student to cope with the many varying roles society expects him to fill in real life:

> Education must recognize that men and women, besides being workers, are husbands and wives; fathers and mothers; social, economic, and political beings; biological animals; religious and emotional entities; and recreationists. Education must train its students to understand themselves and others in all their relationships.[19]

In short, the General College was founded on the belief that higher education should not only train individuals to perform successfully in a vocation, but that it should also prepare them to lead meaningful lives.

While philosophical statements and policy commitments by the founders of the College are illuminating, to be effective they must be put into practice. I think that John Dewey's influence on the General College can be seen most clearly by an analysis of the subject matter in the College curriculum and methods of instruction employed by the faculty.

During the first year of the General College, only eighteen courses were offered. Students were allowed to choose their own classes under a free elective system. The College felt that such a system would do more to stimulate motivation in students than a program of required courses would. Students could select courses to suit their own particular needs and interests. Guidance in the form of counseling and comprehensive testing was made available to students to assist [illegible] making their selections. From 1931 to 1936, the number and variety of courses were greatly expanded and developed, so that by 1937 the number totaled well over seventy. Although by policy none of the courses concentrated on isolated subject matters, they were grouped into several general areas. These included such fields of knowledge as home life, human biology, psychology, the physical sciences, English, the arts, history and government studies, and contemporary affairs. All of the courses borrowed freely from each other and, where possible, they complemented each other. In 1937, a number of orientation courses were set up as a means of uniting related materials from different subject matter areas.

My purpose here is not to present a detailed account of the curriculum during the early period of the College. The curriculum went through many changes during these first few years. Many courses and subject areas were combined or restructured from one year to the next. I have chosen, rather, to represent courses and subject areas which best seem to depict the overall approach to education taken by the faculty and administration during this period. Some course descriptions I have taken directly from General College bulletins; others I have taken from one of two invaluable books, Building a Curriculum for General Education, edited by Ivol Spafford, and The Effective General College Curriculum, dealing with the General College during its formative period.

Home Life

Most college students are at an age when they look forward to marriage and homemaking. According to Dewey, the fact that the home is society's most effective educational agency, and that it serves as the focus of the most satisfying of human relationships, is justification for the inclusion of Home Life as an area of study within a general education curriculum. In the General College, the objective of the Home Life area was to "assist students in developing the ideals and attitudes, interests and understanding, habits and skills, which are conducive to the best functioning of all the members of a family and of the family as a part of democratic society."[20] Courses in the Home Life curriculum focused upon developing "sensitivity to and awareness of the problems of biological and psychological adjustments and a knowledge of how to budget, how to make homes charming, how to dress, how to buy and use shelter, food, and clothing."[21] In order to make the subject matter of the area fully operational to the student, much material from other areas of study was integrated into its courses.

Courses like "The Home and Present Society" and "Human Relationships and Family Life," for instance, relied heavily upon psychology and the biological sciences. "Maintenance Aspects of Family Life," which dealt with efficient operation of the home, drew heavily from economics and courses in natural resources. In the Home Life curriculum, examples, issues, and topics were all drawn from real life, especially from the student's own experiences. By including real life experiences into the curriculum, and by integrating knowledge and materials from many fields, the Home Life area hoped to give students a complete view of problems which arise in living as a family member.

While the subject matter itself actively involved students in the coursework, the fact that the material studied was drawn from experiences the student found himself faced with everyday was enough to give the Home Life curriculum currency and relevance. The methods of instruction also contributed relevancy: "Four types of procedures were used in this area--class discussions, conferences with individual students, assigned and suggested readings, and outside study of special problems."[22] Outside speakers were frequently used, and each quarter panel discussions and symposia involving students and experts were set up. Discussions were stimulated by films, data from various studies, and case histories.

Human Biology

In the early years of the General College, courses dealing with biology, health, and hygiene were closely associated with the Home Life area. Results of various surveys and counseling sessions indicated that a large number of students lacked a basic understanding of disease and death, the principles of sex, reproduction, and healthful living. This lack among the students led the General College to introduce a sequence of biological science courses emphasizing practical application rather than technical expertise. A primary concern of all science courses in the General College was the development of a scientific method of problem-solving.

> A major objective in human biology as offered in the General College has been to impart information of man as an animal in the ongoing scheme of nature. A second objective, educating in matters of personal and community health, builds on and makes practical application of the foundation gained in biological science. A third is to impart a knowledge of the scientific method and to encourage use of the method in thinking.[23]

Such practical goals of the curriculum necessitated selectivity in subject matter. Thus, the General College faculty was constantly sorting

through masses of scientific materials with the aim of selecting content relevant to everyday life experiences:

> The administrators of the sequence have striven continuously to select, from the vast and bewildering mass of scientific material, the basic facts and principles and to disencumber these essentials from irrelevant, inconsequential, or exceedingly technical materials. The course contents selected on this basis should represent the greatest possible value to the homemaker, the business man, the artist, and other non-medical or non-biological groups.[24]

Human Biology, the basic "core course" in the biology area, began with an introduction to the human body, described the various systems of the body, introduced diagnostic testing and therapy, and finally indicated the broad interrelationships between human biology and the other sciences and between human biology and the social studies. The biological science courses placed a heavy emphasis upon the development and maintenance of mental health and physical hygiene, medical care and disease prevention. Social studies were integrated into the sequence as a means of explaining community health and the government agencies, laws, and regulations affecting it.

Psychology

Many students entering the General College lacked a basic understanding of themselves and their relationships with others. Courses like "Practical Applications of Psychology" and "Human Development and Personal Adjustment" were set up primarily to take care of this need. The first course centered on human problems taught not as subject matter, but as examples which would provide tools to be used by the student in his everyday affairs:

> Practical Applications of Psychology has been designed and taught with the aim of helping the student better to understand himself and his fellow men and to help him solve many of his everyday problems. To this end the teaching of psychology as a discipline in and of itself has been subordinated and the emphasis has been on considering it as a tool, a means to an end rather than an end.[25]

Topics selected for study in psychology were developed to focus on the student's everyday problems, and numerous examples of his daily behavior

were used to illustrate each point. The student was also introduced to the scientific method as a contrast to reasoning based upon superstition and mysticism. Examples of scientific and nonscientific approaches to identical problems were demonstrated. The scientific method was described as a useful tool in reasoning out everyday problems encountered by students:

> Familiar problems, such as the student's beliefs and theories about dreams, telepathy, and spiritualism are introduced, and experiments the student himself can conduct to test the validity of these beliefs are described. Taking science out of the laboratory and into the student's home, where he can experiment with many of his own problems without scientific apparatus, seems to bring it into closer relation to him.[26]

Among the other topics covered were beliefs and some of the common effects that beliefs can have on our everyday life: "The importance of emotion and suggestion in sharing popular beliefs and attitudes is indicated, with examples of the way in which executives and politicians use emotion and suggestion."[27]

"Human Development and Personal Adjustment" was a two-quarter sequence course established primarily to "help students meet problems of personal, social, and family relations, to give them some understanding of and orientation to their own life processes, and to encourage them to a responsible participation in college life and the social life of their community."[28] Materials for the course -- traditionally scattered over many courses, such as psychology, sociology, family relations, and parent education -- were brought together in order to make "Human Development and Personal Adjustment" a coherent unit.

General College teachers of psychology, home life, and biological science courses believed that coordination of subject matter was necessary in order to make their respective courses work. A full understanding of the practical applications of one area required that the student have at least a partial understanding of certain aspects of the others. For this reason, while insuring that materials did not overlap, they planned and structured their courses so that they freely drew from, and complemented, others.

The Physical Sciences

The physical sciences have played a major part in shaping the life styles of modern society. Improvements in transportation, sanitation, communication, and industrial production are the results of scientific

research and development. According to Dewey, education should not be concerned with the technical aspects of scientific developments; these he leaves to the specialist: "Whatever natural science may be for the specialist, for educational purposes it is knowledge of the conditions of human action."[29] Since education is concerned with the conditions of human action, it is naturally concerned with the way in which developments in the natural sciences affect man. A view similar to Dewey's was expressed by A.L. Vaughan, the coordinator of the General College physical sciences curriculum during the College's early years:

> Every individual needs to learn to understand and use these modern conveniences to live in a world that is constantly changing because of new discoveries in the physical sciences or new uses of things already known. He needs to expect change, to adjust to it, and to help make change.[30]

A concern for the effects of a changing world on man led to a practical approach to the teaching of natural science in the General College.

Dewey maintained that the important educational outcome of a study of the sciences was an understanding of the nature of its method. The scientific method, according to Dewey, provides the student not only with a procedure for scientific inquiry, but also with a valuable tool for dealing with everyday problems. Dewey held that most schools emphasized science rather than the method of science: "The pupils learn a 'science' instead of learning the scientific way of treating the familiar material of ordinary experience."[31] In the General College, according to Vaughan, the scientific method provided a primary justification for the teaching of the physical sciences in general education: "The scientific method is of extreme importance to mankind, and the understanding and practice of this method are among the greatest contributions of the physical sciences to general education."[32] He expresses the value of understanding the use and application of this method: "A proper respect for and appreciation of the careful work of others as they apply the scientific method to problems of general concern should make it much easier for valid ideas to grow and make headway."[33] And the way the scientific method is taught is, "not by talking about the method and constantly referring to it by name. . . the best way to teach it will be by continually using facts and by carefully distinguishing between facts, fallacies, and fancies."[34]

In the General College science curriculum, the courses were of a "survey" nature with no prerequisites. Materials used were selected on the basis of their practicality, their general interest, and their exemplification of a way of thinking. The materials and topics covered varied as new scientific research became available and as student interests and

needs changed. The topics and materials were drawn from the fields of physics, chemistry, astronomy, and technology. The practical emphasis of the courses is evident in the following list of goals for the physical science sequence. The sequence attempted to develop a student who:

> . . .is conscious of those fundamental concepts, laws, or principles which form the basis of all scientific application and phenomena.
>
> Knows these laws and principles in their uses in everyday life.
>
> Has a clear idea of the orderliness and interrelatednes of nature.
>
> Has the scientific attitude toward doing and thinking in all life's work.
>
> Has scientific appreciation of that which comes only with knowing some of the reasons back of natural phenomena.
>
> Has his curiosity aroused and his observation stimulated and has become habituated to informing himself by reacting and observation.
>
> Is aware of and curious about the effects of scientific investigation and discovery and their technological applications to the social, political, and economic problems of today.[35]

In General College physical science courses, attention was given to the relationships with other subject matter areas in the College. Effects upon home life, health, and hygiene resulting from developments in science and technology were stressed. Selection, use, and maintenance of mechanical and electrical equipment for the home, as well as problems of illumination, humidity, ventilation, sanitation, and insulation were covered. The effects of scientific discovery and research upon contemporary affairs and governmental regulation were also developed and discussed in some detail. These examples of synthesizing various areas of study illustrated a concern on the part of the physical science faculty for uniting the student's diverse curriculum into a whole and meaningful experience.

Writing, Literature, and Speech

The General College made extensive effort from its beginning to assist its students in dealing with writing problems. Writing laboratories were established to personalize instruction in composition so that individual student weaknesses could be overcome and abilities strengthened. MacLean noted that "we sought to sharpen the student's imagery, to get him to put his images and ideas into concrete, vivid, simple language. This process, of course, shifts the emphasis from theory and memorization to practical application of rhetorical and grammatical principles."[36]

A practical emphasis in education was also evident in the literature courses:

> The courses in literature in the General College try to present materials that will have immediate application in the students' lives and to provide such direction for leisure-time activities as can be given by instruction in critical reading and in acquiring standards for the discriminating selection of books and magazines.[37]

In literature courses students were encouraged to develop objective standards for judging their reading and to understand that feelings, though important, were not primary. Materials for the literature courses were drawn from contemporary magazines and books, as well as from standard fiction and non-fiction works.

During the early years of the General College, experimental courses in speech and oral communication were developed. The use of motion pictures and recording machines made it possible for the student to observe for himself changes in his speech behavior.

The General Arts

According to Dewey, the arts constitute for education "the chief agencies of an intensified, enhanced appreciation. . .they have the office . . .in forming standards for the worth of later experience."[38] In short, education is concerned with art for the reason of developing appreciation and a sense of taste toward experience.

In a similar vein, Gerald Hill, coordinator of the General College General Arts area in 1939-40, pointed out that "Works of art are human expressions; they are human experiences. Insofar as we enjoy them, we share with their creators worlds of new perspectives and existences entirely beyond actual existences."[39] In the General College curriculum, art courses had the primary aim of establishing for students the basis for a wide appreciation of all arts which, in turn, would lead to an increased understanding of all human actions and relations:

> It would seem that in general education all the arts could be taught in a flexible series of courses, each course upheld by the same general purpose. This purpose is the development of an increased breadth and depth of understanding of human endeavors and relations derived from an inquiry into painting, music, sculpture, architecture. . .and commercial art.[40]

The controlling purpose behind all the General College art courses was the development of a sense of appreciation, an open-minded attitude, and the satisfaction that comes with rich and active living.

One of the courses in the General Arts sequence, "Art Laboratory," placed its chief emphasis on "learning by doing." In consultation with the instructor, students were encouraged to plan their own programs on the basis of their individual needs, interests, and abilities. Students were allowed to go about their projects unencumbered by the pressures of competition. Each student progressed at his own speed and each was graded on the basis of his fulfillment of a self-defined goal.

Lucille Fisher's description of the atmosphere and attitude of the art lab is especially interesting:

> The atmosphere of the laboratory is free and informal. Each person goes about his projected work with the concentration and unselfconsciousness of a creative artist. The laboratory, he feels, is his personal workshop, holding manifold possibilities for him. He is interested in what others are doing, gladly gives them whatever help he can, and appreciates their interest in his work.[41]

Fisher attributes such a constructive informality to the lack of competition between students. If Dewey is correct about man being by nature a social being, an environment of students doing things in open view of each other may be the most conducive environment to mutual interest and participation.

History and Government Studies

According to Dewey, "History as a formulated study is but the body of known facts about the activities and sufferings of the social group with which our own lives are contiguous, and through reference to which our own customs and institutions are illuminated."[42] Dewey also notes that "knowledge of the past is the key to understanding the present."[43]

Courses in the General College in the "History and Government Studies" area reflected this philosophy. "The Modern World," a survey of European history, laid particular stress upon contemporary events and world affairs. The course "maintained a constant effort to show how history explains and clarifies the world of today."[44] In the third year of the General College's existence, "Minnesota: Its History and People" was introduced as a course which described the sequence of events that led to the formation of modern Minnesota. Both courses were characterized as examples of applied history:

"Without sacrificing the historical approach they stress current situations and problems; they utilize history to explain the present."[45]

"The American Citizen and His Government," a government studies course, was "designed to lead students through an analysis and description of the American government as it functions at the present time. Emphasis is placed on preparation for citizenship."[46] History courses in the General College treated the present as a logical outcome of the past; government courses, on the other hand, attempted to deal directly with the present.

Contemporary Affairs

In the General College Contemporary Affairs curriculum, such courses as "Current Magazine Reading" and "Formation of Public Opinion" were designed to help inform students about the problems of the world in which they were living. Aside from course work, students were encouraged to attend and participate in forums, convocations, student activities, and departmental public lectures.

Orientation Courses

While at the outset General College courses focused upon the everyday needs and problems of its students, by 1937 the College detected a definite shift of interest in certain areas. It was found, for instance, that a student who wished to concentrate part of his program upon individual growth and development would have to take courses in such diverse areas as human biology, psychology, writing laboratory, oral communication, home life, art, and the physical sciences. But if the student's concentration comprised only a portion of his full program, his course work would greatly interfere with the completion of his total program. Similar problems were encountered with students wishing to make concentrated studies in the family and home life, vocational, and socio-civic areas. One of the primary goals of the college was to assist the student in acquiring the skills necessary to deal with the everyday problems; but to do so, he would need to take practically all of the courses offered in the curriculum. Thus, though the College had managed to focus its attention upon individual problems and upon everyday experience, it had not successfully made the attainment of problem-solving skills available to all of its students.

In order to deal with this problem, the General College developed an innovative set of "core courses" centered on four areas. The courses, instead of dealing with specific fields of knowledge, concentrated upon what the College called "Orientation" courses. Orientation was defined as:

> Individual growth in, acquaintance with, understanding of, and readiness to meet life situations through developing ideals, skills, and habits, and acquiring attitudes, knowledge, and appreciation in these four life relationships - individual, home life, vocational, and social civic.[47]

Orientation courses, like all courses in the General College, focused upon real-life activities; but unlike other courses, the different fields of knowledge were not separated. By taking such an approach, the faculty hoped to present life experiences as they are experienced by people outside of school:

> These core courses were to take life activities as their focus, drawing on the wide range of man's experience in learning to meet situations. Thus, students gain experience in meeting situations in the same manner as people outside the school face real life problems. No dividing lines among fields of knowledge were to be recognized.[48]

Ultimately, the four areas developed in the General College were Individual, Vocational, Social-Civic, and Home Life orientation. Subject matter for each course was worked out through committees made up of faculty members from various fields of knowledge. The Individual Orientation committee, for instance, was made up of members of the art, biology, counseling, English, home economics, music, sociology, and speech faculties. The Vocational Orientation committee was made up of members from physical science, sociology, counseling, and speech. The other committees were likewise represented by members from various subject matter areas.

According to MacLean, the intent of courses which dealt directly with basic life relationships was to assist the College in developing a curriculum "which will help students of the future to pool their experiences, pleasant and unpleasant, of all kinds into a pattern that will give life real meaning and real value."[49] The pioneers of the General College hoped that these courses would provide students with opportunities to develop a realistic understanding of themselves in relation to others and to the world in which they lived.

The preceding description of the General College curriculum supports my contention that the program of general education adopted by the General College was significantly influenced by John Dewey's educational philosophy. In subject matter, teaching methods, experimentation, and a concern for students' individual needs and abilities, the General College seemed to be an institution implementing the spirit of Dewey's philosophy. Finally, the

fact that the General College so strongly emphasized the scientific method in so many diverse areas indicates that Dewey's theory of education was a governing factor in the College's early development.

Subject matter especially, as it was developed in the General College curriculum, was very much compatible with Dewey's philosophy. Dewey maintained that education should present a real-life environment in order to stimulate students to develop their own abilities, habits, and attitudes. Such an effort, it seems to me, was the intent of the founders of the General College from its beginning; policy statements from Director MacLean and President Coffman expressed a commitment to a curriculum of life experiences for their students. In the curriculum development that followed, the General College faculty made concerted efforts to integrate contemporary problems into course work in an effort to open the classroom to relevant situations. Making the physical and biological sciences relevant to the everyday lives of students required a radical redirection of traditional subject matter, while home life and contemporary affairs courses were inherently suited to "real life" experiences.

The General College adopted a method of instruction which seemed distinctively Deweyan. Dewey maintained that a student developed his habits and attitudes through guided activities in a social environment. The General College attempted to get its students actively involved in projects, labs, and discussions in the classroom. The faculty made public meetings, forums, and college activities the topic of discussions in the classroom in order to encourage students to attend and participate in these affairs. Through the inclusion of examples and topics drawn from life activities, students were encouraged to take an active role in the subject matter.

Another aspect of the General College philosophy which indicated an active concern for getting students involved, was the personal counseling which not only provided the student opportunities to air his special needs and problems but which also served as a valuable device for the College to measure its own programs.

Dewey maintained that educational institutions should base their educative processes on the individual abilities, interests, and needs of their students; this was a major concern voiced by the founders of the General College. Indeed, the fact that student needs were not being provided for elsewhere in the University led to the founding of the General College. Examples of such a concern are the development of laboratories, counseling services, and the additions and deletions in the curriculum during the early period of the College's life. Much effort and research was expended to insure that course materials were specifically designed to meet student needs; course content was frequently altered in response to changing conditions in society and changing needs of students.

Dewey maintained that society, like individuals, was constantly changing and that educational institutions in society must change also. As wants, needs, and desires of students change, so must the school. The General College's disregard for traditional boundary lines between areas of knowledge, its shifts in concentration over the years to include new subject matter, and the inclusion of orientation-type courses established it as an experimental institution.

Dewey held that habits and attitudes tending to establish a method of thinking were far more valuable to the individual than the mere acquisition of knowledge and that education should give the student a working knowledge of the scientific method. The scientific method provided the individual with a procedure for attacking problems, a way of approaching complex life situations. The science and psychology areas of the General College were primarily concerned with providing students with a thorough understanding of the operation and application of the scientific method as a valuable tool which could be used in all life experiences.

The General College was, at the outset, an institution heavily influenced by the ideas of John Dewey, which is not to say that Dewey's influence was direct, or even acknowledged. As noted in my introduction, nowhere do the bulletins, documents, and other publications concerning the founding of the General College make a single reference or acknowledgement to Dewey or his theory. The General College is consistently referred to as "an experiment in general education," and we are led to believe that the methods and practices adopted by the College were, for the most part, based on current principles of general education. Thus a reasonable inference seems to be that the methods, procedures, and practices of general education are, to a very large degree, indebted to the ideas of John Dewey.

Footnotes

1. Malcolm S. MacLean, The General College Newsletter, Vol. IX, No. 3, June 1962, p. 2.

2. The reports of various studies and surveys of youth during this period may be found in Youth Tell Their Story, by Howard Bell, Washington, D.C., 1938; Women After College, by Robert G. Foster, New York, 1942, a report of a study regarding how little college learning was related to the lives and actions of women; When Youth Leave School, by Eckert, Spalding and Wilson, New York, 1938, a New York Regents' inquiry into youth after leaving college.

3. Lotus D. Coffman in the foreward to They Went to College, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1941, p. 9.

4. John Dewey, Democracy and Education, New York: Macmillan, 1944, p. 38.

5. Ibid., p. 24.

6. John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," Teachers Manuals, Chicago: A. Flanagan Co., (no date), p. 8.

7. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

8. Dewey, Democracy and Education, op. cit., p. 20.

9. Ibid., p. 22.

10. Ibid., p. 59.

11. Loc. cit.

12. William Kilpatrick, "Dewey's Influence on Education," in Paul Schlipp's Philosophy of John Dewey, New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1951, pp. 461-62.

13. Lotus Coffman, quoted by M.S. MacLean in "The General College: Its Origin and Influence" appearing in General Education in Transition ed. by H.T. Morse, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951, p. 12.

14. The data and results of these studies may be found in These We Teach, They Went to College, Building a Curriculum for General Education, and The Effective General College Curriculum. All in bibliography.

15. The Committee on Administrative Reorganization, The Junior College of the University of Minnesota, February 1932, p. 6.

16. Ibid., p. 14.

17. Malcolm MacLean, "Organization of the General College" in The Effective General College Curriculum, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1937, p. 19.

18. Malcolm S. MacLean, "The General College: Its Origin and Influence" appearing in General Education in Transition ed. by H.T. Morse, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951, p. 35.

19. MacLean, "Organization of the General College," op. cit., p. 19.

20. Ivol Spafford, Building a Curriculum for General Education, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1943, p. 162.

21. MacLean, "Organization of the General College," op. cit., p. 23.

22. Spafford, op. cit., p. 166.

23. Ibid., p. 243.

24. Ibid., p. 253.

25. Ibid., p. 324.

26. Ibid., p. 321.

27. Ibid., p. 322.

28. Ibid., p. 325.

29. Dewey, Democracy and Education, op. cit., p. 228.

30. Spafford, op. cit., pp. 263-64.

31. Dewey, Democracy and Education, op. cit., p. 220.

32. Spafford, op. cit., p. 264.

33. Ibid., p. 265.

34. Loc. cit.

35. Ibid., p. 268.

36. MacLean, "Organization of the General College," op. cit., p. 25.

37. Spafford, op. cit., p. 281.

38. Dewey, Democracy and Education, op. cit., p. 238.

39. Spafford, op. cit., p. 231.

40. Ibid., p. 232.

41. Ibid., p. 238.

42. Dewey, Democracy and Education, op. cit., p. 210.

43. Ibid., p. 214.

44. MacLean, "Organization of the General College," op. cit., p. 71.

45. Ibid., p. 63.

46. Ibid., p. 83.

47. Spafford, op. cit., p. 96.

48. Ibid., p. 97.

49. Malcolm S. MacLean in the introduction to "A College with a Life-Centered Curriculum" reprinted from Journal of Higher Education, Vol. XI, Nos. 5 and 6, May and June 1940, p. 2.

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1. They Went To College: A Study of 951 Former University Students, by C. Robert Pace. 1941.

2. These We Teach: A Study of General College Students, by Cornelia T. Williams. 1943.

3. Building a Curriculum for General Education: A Description of the General College Program, by Ivol Spafford and Others. 1943.

4. Outcomes of General Education: An Appraisal of the General College Program, by Ruth E. Eckert.

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