

Comparative Perspective on the Reform of General Education

M. Paul Latiolais,¹⁾ Stephen Reder,¹⁾ and Hajime Kobayashi^{2)*,**}

¹⁾Portland State University, ²⁾Hokkaido University

Abstract General Education is closely connected with Lifelong Learning. The two are mediated by working students: Lifelong Learners. The acts of lifelong learners and faculty have to support University-Community Partnerships, so the content of general education has to mature students' abilities as researchers, citizens, and professionals. By the educational acts faculty learn himself/herself to be a lifelong learner. Portland State University (PSU) has clarified, after their university reform experience, its set of educational goals based on four areas: (a) Inquiry and critical thinking; (b) Communication; (c) Diversity and multiculturalism; (d) Social responsibility. PSU's faculty has adopted a new general education program, University Studies, which begins from Freshman Inquiry to Sophomore Inquiry, Upper Division Cluster Course, then to Senior Capstone: a community-based learning experience. Total credits are forty-five. General education has combined with lifelong learning, and now it begins to join to Academic Research. Hokkaido University corresponded to the new policy for the university by the Monbu-sho in 1991: Deregulation of University Establishment Standard. In 1996 Hokkaido University established the Center of Higher Education including the Departments of Common Education for all Faculties, Higher Education Development, and Lifelong Education Planning. In 2000 a new common education begins: Subjects of physical education, liberal arts, bases of specialties, foreign languages. Liberal arts consists of humanity, social science, and natural science; joint lecture; seminar, etc. But there has been no discussion about the educational goals.

(These presentations were given at the Asia Pacific Conference, October 1999, Portland State University.)

(Received on January 18, 2001)

New Challenges of General Education

M. Paul Latiolais

We will begin this presentation by describing two models of general education reform, one Japanese and one American. Both seem to reflect the specific climate of change in their respective countries. Portland State changed its general education program as part of an institutional reorganization. Hokkaido University changed its general education program as part of a national reorganization. Portland State moved from a distribution model to a core curriculum using a centralized administrative structure. Hokkaido University moved away from a centralized general education system with a single faculty to what looks very much like a distribution model.

On the surface these changes seem to be in opposite directions. On closer examination, these new programs have similar goals and similar structures. Rather than moving in opposite directions, they are converging. Indeed, the two re-organizations were not done in a vacuum. They were not independent events. The purpose of this presentation is to uncover the similarities and differences of these two models of change. That is, we will uncover the internationalization of the general education curriculum.

I will begin by outlining my perspective on what has been going on at Portland State University for the last six years with respect to general education. Next, Professor Kobayashi will give a picture of the context under which Hokkaido University has begun changing its General Education Program related with Lifelong learning. Lastly,

*) 連絡先 : 060-0810 札幌市北区北10条西7丁目 北海道大学大学院文学研究科

**) Correspondence: Graduate School of Letters, Hokkaido University, Sapporo 060-0810, JAPAN

Professor Reder will provide a theoretical context for understanding these and other reform efforts in higher education.

In 1993, at the request of the Provost, Michael Reardon, the newly formed General Education Working Group began an analysis of Portland State's general education program. Unlike previous attempts to revise general education at Portland State, this group began by researching the issues from a national perspective and what solutions other institutions had found. After an initial data gathering, the group realized that it needed to develop a set of goals to guide its analysis and revision.

“As the General Education Working Group was struggling to understand the core issues involved in constructions a meaningful general education experience for students at Portland State University, we suddenly realized that we were beginning to talk of learning outcomes rather than a set of requirements” Charles R. White, *Journal of General Education*.

The above quote refers two activities. First, the brainstorming we did on what the role of general education should be in a university, and second, that the program should be organized around goals for student learning and student outcomes.

As for as student outcomes, we created a rich set of goals based on four areas:

- (a) Inquiry and critical thinking;
- (b) Communication;
- (c) Diversity and multiculturalism;
- (d) Social responsibility.

Rather than “teach” these goals as subjects, we structured a program which would help students learn these goals. We decided one necessary way to address these goals was community service. So we put in place a Capstone course requiring community service. Currently, approximately 2000 seniors per year are involved in community service activities in the city of Portland. To implement the capstone courses, the university has had to make a concerted effort to build Community/University partnerships. This experience has taught us that students need to be involved in community service from their first year at the university. Portland State is now experimenting with community service models in Freshman Inquiry.

One of the goals of the program that was not explicitly articulated, but was part of the original conversation and is implicit in all of what we are doing is Life-long Learning. Each of the four areas is thought of as a life-long activity.

We are continuing to improve our articulation of University Studies goals, so that they are clearer for us, the faculty, and clearer for the students. As we understand what we are teaching and what students are learning, our sense

of what the appropriate goals are get clearer and change.

Now that the program has been in existence for six years, the next step (along with clarifying and restating the goals) is to find ways measure to what extent our students are meeting those goals and develop feedback strategies for continued improvement. This work also changes our perceptions of the appropriateness of goals. There are several challenges in this endeavor, many of which are structural. Two that I have been able to identify are:

I. Outside Critics. University Studies is still controversial in the university. It is difficult to do real meaningful assessment when there is fear that the results could be used to argue the scrapping of the program. Such an environment breeds insularity and distrust.

II. Institutional Culture. This could refer to many issues, but in this case I am referring to two issues:

1. Faculty are not used to having their students externally assessed to determine to what extent their class is a success. This can be very threatening. Having the faculty more involved in the process helps, but that implies that they want to be involved and have the time to be involved, which leads to the second issue.

2. The system we are creating is counter to traditional institutional culture. Faculty are not rewarded for spending time and effort engaging students in the issues of inquiry and critical thinking, communication, diversity and multiculturalism, and social responsibility. Moreover, faculty are not encouraged to engage in these activities themselves outside of their discipline.

One of the underlying goals of University Studies has been to create in the students a sense of community. Our original idea was that if the students developed a sense of community with their peers, they would more likely stay at Portland State. This was supported by the research and indeed it worked. Our retention has gone up considerably, especially between freshman and sophomore years. However, what we really were doing was developing in the students a sense of what a community is and how to interact in it. That really is what these goals are about.

As a result, the faculty involved in University Studies (especially Freshman Inquiry) began to realize the lack of community in their own surroundings and their own lack of connection to the larger Portland community.

In conclusion, I would like to raise a question: How do we organize faculty work to: (1) (Re-?) create the environment of a learning community and (2) Articulate with larger community to promote community and common goals? If we can answer that question, we will not only be better able to teach our students, but we will also be better able to meet our other responsibilities that are currently at odds with teaching.

General Education and Lifelong Learning in Japan

Hajime' Kobayashi

I. University's Educational Goals

During the past four years, Steve Reder, Paul Latiolais, and I have comparatively researched the relationship between general education and lifelong learning at Portland State University (PSU) and Hokkaido University (HU). One of the focal points of this research has been the definition of "universal goals" of general education in the different countries. Examining together curricula of general education at two universities, I have understood Japanese university's current curriculum has not clarified its educational goals. HU continues to respect general education and started new Core Curriculum for freshmen and sophomore etc. from 2000 academic year.

But, HU has not created its educational goals, which deeply concerns with society/community development. However, when we examine our past we can discover some unfinished ideas. In this context I would like to reexamine PSU's four educational goals which Professor Latiolais has mentioned above, which are based on community-university relationship, collaboration with general education and lifelong learning. I will consider Japanese experiences of those.

HU started in 1872 in Tokyo, and in 1876 it transferred to Sapporo Agricultural College (SAC) under the strong influence of William S. Clark, the President of Massachusetts Agricultural College. His ideas were: 1) Sciences for industrial modernization, 2) A frontier spirit to tame the Hokkaido and Japan, 3) General education including Humanities. He required his students "to be gentlemen", and the alumni of SAC contributed to many local communities, junior and senior high schools, and religious groups, etc., as the salt of the earth. Some graduates took active parts in the world, like Inazo Nitobe, who wanted to be "a bridge" of the Pacific Ocean.

This early history of SAC has been carefully studied by HU as its precious and indispensable heritage. From the viewpoint of our histories I do entirely agree with PSU's four educational goals. We can put them together as the most important ideas of general education. PSU's four educational goals link to the important idea of community-university relationships, because the university does not exist on a desert island, but exactly the opposite. Connecting with communities and local governments, University Studies, PSU's core of general education, connects with the community reforms: the students as lifelong learners make a bridge between two "worlds". The concept of lifelong learners must fundamentally change the concept of lifelong learning. I want to reinforce the idea through previous Japanese experiences, in which students might have a different relationship to lifelong learning.

II. Attempts of university extension in Meiji and Taisho eras

The first experience of university extension were concerned by SAC, and other private colleges in the 1880-90s. In 1885, Dr. Nitobe hoped to build up a new type of evening school, Sapporo Citizen School, which would have three parts: 1) school for adults and the aged: basic lessons on history, economics, agriculture and natural sciences. 2) school for young men who had ambitions to go to university or college, but had no chance: a preparatory course. 3) school for poor children: basic lessons of Japanese language, just a little English, arithmetic, and needlework for girls only. In 1894 only the third was founded by Nitobe and his wife, being a little private institution run by SAC students as volunteers, and it continued till 1943, after ten years of Nitobe's death. Recently, in 1994, HU performed a centennial anniversary of the Evening School, and in 1998 built a monument to celebrate Nitobe.

Contemporary to the Nitobe's School, The Tokyo College (Waseda University's antecedent, founded in 1882 in the middle of the Democratic Rights Movement) was already developing extension lectures: Round lectures held in local communities all over Japan, auditor courses for people, correspondence courses for secondary education level, and opening library to the public. By these off campus educational activities (adding on campus, too), the College tried not only to get the public mind, but give their minds independence. Then, Waseda was, and is now, a front-runner on university extension in Japan.

However, in 1918 the Japanese central government settled a new University Law, which widened the extent of the university. Repealed the discrimination from Imperial Universities, private colleges gained official status. But, it meant they joined a corner of the establishment. After the new law, private universities gradually lost their strong services for the people. At the same time, SAC, which had become the Agricultural College of Tohoku Imperial University newly built in 1907, was independent as Hokkaido Imperial University, but it also lost its tradition of critical thinking about the State and the Nation: For example, two "J" (Japan and Jesus) by Kanzo Uchimura, a close friend of Nitobe, which contents a viewpoint of Real Nationalism.

III. Ideas of University Reform before and after the Second World War

In the difficult situation of the Fascism Japan, there were some remarkable attempts by our brave ancestors. One example was actions for the protection of democracy by professors of Waseda/. From them I single out one professor, Ikuo Oyama. He and his colleagues, in and out of the university, made many attempts at social reforms as a strong wing of the Taisho Democracy Movement, and the anti-

Fascism/Anti-Militarism Movement during 1920s-1930s. Professor Oyama insisted on the necessities of university reform so that it functioned well for democratic changes of Japanese society and politics. The other, he appealed to the public that universities have to develop the sciences to generate its universality for humankind, especially Japanese universities must create social sciences to break through its difficult situations. The second role of the universities is, he argued, to educate the students as protagonists of social reform, forming them into "trained specialists."

In the period of postwar social reforms, by establishing of the new Constitution, and the new Fundamental Law for Education, university reforms were considered to change traditional cultural hegemony. Regrettably reforming university's system university's educational goal was not clarified. For example, in 1949, the president of New Hokkaido University, Seiya Ito, addressed the first students after changing the university's character from Imperial University to "National University," emphasizing the new university's four features: a) general education, b) advanced professional training, c) spontaneous self-studying by students, d) new graduate schools as centers of academic research.

But, the graduate school did not have what it takes. Students' educational conditions became worse with an increasing number of students. After the Student Power Movement in 1968-69, there were some attempts to reform liberal arts and sciences courses, but it did not succeed sufficiently even in HU, which was sympathetic to general education having the heritage of SAC. The most important task for the postwar reform had to be how to change the content of lessons in order to display the university goals by enriching general education. The bag had changed, but the wine was the same.

IV. Debts: Social request to national universities to reform

Many problems remained in the universities' Debts to the society/community. In Japan there were a few idea on the universities "of the people, by the people, for the people." Debts have to be paid! Today many Japanese people, particularly big business managers, are blaming national universities for their lack of accountability and responsibility to the society. However, to create real reform we have to go back to postwar Japan. Especially I pay attention to the thought of Professor Senroku Uehara. In 1946 he elected the President of Tokyo Industrial University, which he changed to the Hitotsubashi University. And he took part in the first university control problem in 1947, identifying the university's three social roles: a) intellectual research, b) citizen formation, and c) professional training. From this viewpoint he worked to rebuild his University and to the Japanese Higher Education System in order to reorganize Japanese politics, economy, and society. So he put emphasis

on the importance of general education which was necessary to break through the traditional character of the Japanese people: pettiness, vulgarness, and narrow-mindedness, which fostered the Ultra Nationalism. University Faculty not only shared, but also supported, the traditional characters and cultures.

In 1962 Professor Uehara insisted again in the second university control problem the university must be a place to serve the people by offering academic pursuits, and a place to form the people's capacity for self-government. He wanted to build a brilliant future of the university by connecting with new education for lifelong learners as Researcher, Citizen, and Professional. He named this relationship "Social Base" of the University. It was an unfulfilled idea too, but may become the core of new university reform, because it has steady perspectives for the goals of university education: general education, citizen formation, and professional training in the light of lifelong learning.

At last, in 1991 the Japanese Ministry of Education changed its university policy, i.e., Deregulation of University Establishment Standard. Since then, general education courses has surprisingly disappeared in many national universities, but they made many graduate schools with no increase in the number of Faculty members. Our Department, Lifelong Education Planning in the Center of Higher Education, Hokkaido University, was founded in 1996 to continue general education under the Ministry's changing policy. After some trial and error, in 1998 we began two new courses for freshman. In the first course, Society and University, we hope to make the students know there are many alumni who work and live sincerely in their positions. The other course is about The Future of Hokkaido in the 21st Century. This course began as an open lecture for the citizens by HU Committee for Open Lecture, to which our Department has responsibilities as secretariat. To this lecture came many working male adults (not retired, female, nor aged people). After finishing a series of nine lectures given by nine professors in political science, economics, agriculture, fishery, computer science, engineering, medicine, letters, and lifelong learning (given by me), we published an edited book of these lectures from our University Press, and then we began a new series of lectures for freshman.

Conclusion

Early Japanese attempts at University Extension show us Lifelong Learning requires a liberal mind in each Faculty, and social freedom in a democratic society. In particular, the University Faculty must necessarily have a sense of social responsibility toward the people of the community. So, lifelong learning must not remain outside the university. Faculty and students have to go out and return into the university being given energy from the community, then

we have again to go out empowered by the studies in their universities. This is the core of the relationship between lifelong learning and general education.

I entirely agree with the four areas of PSU's existing goals, but I would like to add two other subjects. First, from the viewpoint of lifelong learning, it is better to add "living together in one's community." It will not be the fifth area, but may exist under the four. The second is how to create new relationship among general education, lifelong learning, and academic research. HU has to collaborate with local governments to make new policies in four fields: Industry and work, environment of nature and society, welfare of the people, and, finally, education for all fields and levels. But to attain this, the university must first change its historical characteristics: This is our response to the Debt.

Commentary

Stephen Reder

As I had expected, this session contained some interesting case studies of curriculum design. But contrary to my expectations, the session focused much less on international case studies. A number of common themes have surfaced across the various case studies presented here. I'll focus my comments around two of these themes: *what kind of people are we trying to develop* (whether through professional education or general education) and *what skills and knowledge do we want them to develop?* Along with these themes come a number of important ideas that I will also comment briefly upon: the ideas of *community partnerships, lifelong learning, and collaboration.*

How do these key ideas and experiments in curricular and programmatic innovation fit together? Can we find some order among the range of case studies presented today? I think we can. But to find this order, we may well need assistance from a good theory. As Count Tolstoy reminded us, "there is nothing as practical as a good theory." Here, I will argue, we need a developmental theory that helps us *link individual learning with institutional development.* As an illustration of how developmental theory can play a useful role here, I'm going to draw on the developmental theory of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Among the key tenets in Vygotsky's theory are:

- * Seeing learning and development as the process of internalizing socially organized knowledge and routines.

- * Formulating the *zone of proximal development (zoped)* as an interactional space through which individuals with more skill and knowledge collaborate with less skilled and

knowledgeable individuals to perform key tasks; the zoped is sometimes defined as the difference between what individuals can do by themselves and what they can do when assisted by others (e.g., a parent, a teacher) .

- * Understanding *curriculum* as a sequence of learning environments or contexts or zones of proximal development.

Using these developmental principles, Vygotsky's theory helps us to reformulate some key questions about individual learning and institutional development into perhaps a single more powerful question: *What kinds of learning experiences/environments are needed to produce the type of people we seek?* Thinking hard about this question will help us address other important issues concerning the role of general education in the overall educational enterprise. Vygotsky's theoretical framework offers us a way to understand the contribution of general education other than formulating it in terms of prerequisites for subsequent courses. The case studies from Portland State University and Hokkaido University all exhibit concern with understanding learning and development in such terms.

Using this framework, we can also begin to examine the roles of program design and internationalization within the reform of higher education. We should ask two developmental questions, each represented by a distinct zone of proximal development (zoped):

- * What can people do/learn together that they could not by themselves? (zoped #1)

- * What can institutional partners do together that neither one could do by itself? (zoped #2)

Reflecting on the presentations and case studies presented in this session, these ideas lead towards three distinct senses of lifelong learning that have been mentioned by the various presenters:

- * Students as lifelong learners

- * Lifelong learning as curriculum goals

- * Lifelong learning as a vehicle for program development and outreach.

In closing, let me emphasize that lifelong learning is not a process that takes place entirely in the future, a misconception I believe that has undermined its place in our higher educational systems. Our contemporary postsecondary institutions are the byproduct of lifelong learning that has occurred in the past. This idea, too, has a comfortable home within Vygotsky's developmental theory. Through a process called "prolepsis," development enables us to "Remember the Future!" This is indeed what we must do as we work to strengthen our educational institutions.