
Luther Gulick and the YMCA Training School Curriculum 1887-1903

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In spite of calendars and clocks, time is not measurable — no one can say how long a minute is. It is short enough to pass unnoticed or to die in, or long enough to change the world in. Each of us has 24 hours to daily dispose of, for some it passes quickly and undisturbed, but for others such as Luther Gulick it can be turned into more time in which to complete uncountable accomplishments. His birth in 1865 in Honolulu and his death in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1918 marked the period during which Luther Gulick would affect the world of physical education and the International YMCA movement.

Dr. Gulick was a remarkable organizer as well as a brilliant administrator. He enjoyed taking an idea, developing it, getting the organization of the idea underway, and then turning it over to others so they could carry out the program; then Dr. Gulick would tackle another problem. This was Gulick, he was a pioneer whose philosophy was to climb the next mountain — a religionist whose ministry was physical education. Gulick affected many innovations in physical education, many ideas were born in his mind, but still others were thoughts of others which he took and popularized. He assisted in setting the standards for physical education by disseminating these ideas. This was possible as Dr. Gulick had a vast communication network which consisted of former students who were scattered throughout the country; *The Triangle* which was a publication of the Training School with a considerable circulation, his position as Secretary of the PE Committee on the International YMCA Committee, and by being president of various P.E. bodies.

Gulick's curriculum at the YMCA Training School reflected his beliefs developing man symmetrically, and that athletics would replace gymnastics in the fore of physical education. Dr. Gulick sought a unique balance between practicality and science in all the courses in the curriculum. Gulick's belief was that the gymnasium instructor was to have a "a fair knowledge of the body . . . its structure . . . the ways in which the body works both as a whole and as separate organs . . . (and) have a through knowledge of the laws that govern the body in health.

The Training School curriculum contained anatomy, physiology of exercise, anthropometry, cinematographic analysis, motor development, psychology (of physical

education/sport), history of physical training, and sport skill instruction.

The anatomy course at the Training School was taught differently than were anatomy courses in medical schools. Gulick stated that so far as he knew no medical school in teaching anatomy considered such topics as: the difference in instep of runners and jumpers. This anatomy course was geared to the living model to determine how the muscles functioned during running, jumping, baseball, etc.

Physiology of exercise students performed many experiments in the lab such as measuring the effects of heat on body temperature, measuring the effects of alcohol on the heart, etc. The course syllabus for physiology of exercise included such topics as: cells, bones, foods, blood, lungs, excretion, the nervous system, and the senses. Gulick viewed this area as a necessary tool for the potential physical educator to study, but the body of knowledge was lacking completed research. In order to make this a quality and useful and uniform subject, Gulick authored several publications.

Gulick also introduced anthropometry into the curriculum, as it was a useful tool. He also enlisted the aide of Drs. Sargent, Hitchcock, Blaikie and Seaver to nationally standardize findings in anthropometry. To further solidify this subject in physical education, Dr. Gulick formed the American Academy of Physical Education to bring together those who were doing original scientific research in physical education. This course in anthropometry also included a study of data collection techniques, statistics, and the use of measuring tools for anthropometry.

In 1891 Dr. Gulick introduced another subject to the curriculum. that being photography for the analysis of motion. He maintained that the muscular mechanism of an action could determined by careful observation, In 1893 Dr. Gulick had completed analyses of several sport skills and these were published in the *Triangle* and they were also studied at the Training School,

In the area of motor development, Luther Gulick was an early advocate of the use of developmentally appropriate activities for all age groups. He devised an outline describing appropriate activities for children at all ages. Basically he divided his outline into four stages: precreeeping, creeping, walking, and preschool.

Dr. Gulick's course in psychology asked students to devise games and sports that would be healthful, enjoyable, recreative, and appropriate for that person's stage of maturity. Discussions would revolve around the qualities necessary for a game or sport, how natural desires for activity and self-fulfillment should relate to game and sport construction. As a direct result of this course the game of basketball was devised by James Naismith. There is also evidence that volleyball was also a product of this course.

In 1897 he conducted a course in History and Philosophy of Physical Training. This course was a world history course and surveyed many notable philosophic view points. His course delved into the development of education and physical education in Greece, Rome, Germany, France, England, Sweden, Italy and the United States. Gulick was not just a reporter of past events - he was a philosophic historian - he let history answer the 'what' and philosophy the 'why' of any given incident.

The Training School curriculum included sport skill instruction. High jump, long jump, pole vault, discus, javelin, shot put, football, swimming, lawn tennis, baseball, basketball, rowing, and volleyball were skills which potential physical educators were taught. The whole field of athletic sports was included, prior to this the course of study primarily dealt with indoor gymnastics.

The curriculum outlined herein had great control over the development of physical education in the YMCA. This was accomplished due to Dr. Gulick's two positions, and their importance, one being Superintendent of the Gymnasium Department at the YMCA Training School, and the other being the PE Secretary of the International YMCA Committee. With these two positions Dr. Gulick provided himself with an unequaled ability to affect change in the field of physical education.

This topic is but one small portion of Luther Gulick's life, it is impossible to say what his most valuable contribution was. Perhaps the sum total of his influence is measured in the accomplishments of those whose lives he touched. His single greatest talent was his power to recognize the ability of others and assist them in finding their rightful niche.