

Management of Adult/Occupational Programs

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Abstract

This paper examines the management of adult/occupational programs by referring to *Learning in Adulthood* by Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffarella. In section [I], adult development and the learning experience is examined, in section [II], two important theories on learning in adulthood, the theories of Knowles and Mezirow are reviewed, and in the final section [III], the future challenges for adult/occupational programs are discussed.

Key Words : adult/occupational program, learning in adulthood, lifelong learning

和文要旨

小論では、Sharan B. Merriam, Rosemary S. Caffarella共著の*Learning in Adulthood*を参考に、成人教育プログラムの運営について研究する。[I]では、成人の発達・学習について、[II]では、代表的な成人教育理論であるKnowlesとMezirowの理論をとりあげ議論・検討する。[III]では、今後の日本の成人教育プログラム運営のあり方を模索する。

成人教育プログラム運営について

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[I] Adult Development and the Learning Experience

Both traditional and non-traditional forms of adult education have become more widespread throughout Japan in the past two decades than in any period previously. Lifelong learning is primarily concerned with the education of adults. It is critical for educators to examine more closely the nature and attributes of adulthood; i.e. What it means to be an adult? Educators need to consider the answers to this question when planning and conducting educational programs.

In Japan, after establishing a law for the promotion of lifelong learning in 1990, the idea and practice of this concept of lifelong learning are taking root in our society. In other countries like the United States, terms such as adult education, continuing education or community education are commonly used whereas in Japan the term lifelong learning is the only term currently used to describe adult education.

Sociocultural factors that influence development in adults

When we think of our everyday lives as adults, our living is restricted consciously or unconsciously by sociocultural factors, because our lives are governed by the way we interact as individuals in society. And the definition of adulthood has changed with the times. Then how is change in adulthood determined in a sociocultural context?

First, one of the most important factors that influences development in adults is the social role as a worker. For example, in Japan, the economy has been in recession since the bubble economy ended in the 80s. Many companies have reduced staff or business hours, which has resulted in employees losing their jobs or having more leisure time; those newly unemployed people must undertake job training to find another job or people whose working hours have been cut may seek ways to spend time that they used to spend at work.

Furthermore, as people are living longer because of medical advances, our social role as workers must be viewed in terms of this longer life expectancy. In Japan, almost all organizations set 60 as an age-limit for retirement. Because of the realization of longer lives, more people want to get another job when they reach the retirement age of 60. Until recently, people would work until the age of 60 and then retire. But this model of adult development is gradually changing; one works for a company and after retirement gets another job. It becomes critical that we seek a second-life as a worker.

The second factor is people's family roles such as being a spouse and/or parent. For

instance, one has to take on new family roles such as being a spouse when he/she gets married and as parents when they have children. Further changes occur if they get divorced. In fact, the divorce rate is increasing year by year in Japan; according to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare statistics, the divorce rate in 1998 in Japan was double that of 1947. When one divorces, he/she has to take on a new role. For instance, a husband may have to take care of his children or a wife may have to work in order to support her children. Furthermore, as Japan's population becomes older, a serious family problem is arising; young couples may have to take care of their aging parents. In Japan, the social expectation is that the eldest son should take care of his parents, though this is changing in some way or another because of changing social values. Still, the problem of who should take care of an aging parent remains. Japan's aging population is still an important issue for both families and the government. Thus the dilemma of how to care for an aging population has had a major impact on adult's life.

The third factor is gender, especially for women; there is a big change occurring in women's life styles. In Japan, democracy and strong economic growth after the War II caused women's lives to change dramatically. The typical life for a woman before the War was that she got training for homemaking before she got married, raised children and took care of her husband and her family for life. After the War this lifecycle changed dramatically. Women got a higher education, got jobs, got married and raised family while still working.

On the other hand, it is also true that there is still some discrimination against women even though the women's rights movement has improved gender equality in Japan. When a woman gets married, generally she does all the housework even if she works. When her husband's parents get sick, she usually takes responsibility for looking after them; she may even have to quit her job. Women have to carry a heavy load on their shoulders. As a natural result, more women are deciding to stay single longer and enjoy their lives without the burden of having a family.

Men's roles are also changing. In Japan, for many years in the past, a stereotypical male was someone who worked hard for his company even if it meant ignoring his family life. Recently, more young men are putting more priority on their private lives than their jobs. According to a report by Leisure White Paper '98, as for the question, "which do you put more importance on your job or your leisure time?", the percentage of the respondents who put more importance on leisure was, 7.8% in 1987, and increased to 10.5% in 1996. The percentage of respondents who put more importance on their job was 39.6% in 1987, which decreased to 29.8% in 1996. These statistics show that more men are putting priority on

their personal lives rather than their working lives and this has resulted in men's social roles changing; they don't only work to support their family but also to enjoy their own life and their family life.

As I have outlined, social roles such as being a worker, spouse, and parent as well as one's gender role influence the way we develop as adults. These varying roles are determined primarily by societal expectations and the roles change as society changes. Thus the definition of adulthood depends on when and where one lives. It is impossible to view the concept of adulthood as something separate to the society in which the adult lives.

How the concept of adulthood has changed with the times?

For many years in the past in Japan, to be an adult meant to be someone who works, gets married and has children. While this fundamental model hasn't changed, social expectations of adults are changing according to the socially and culturally defined norms of each generation.

Recently in Japan many young people lead their lives in their own way. In the past, many adults lead their lives in the same style. For instance, it was regarded as normal not to change work once you got a job. Also, it was generally accepted that the oldest son should take over his father's family business. But nowadays, we accept a variety of life styles; some men change their jobs and the eldest son does not always take over his family business. This social tendency is partially due to changes in Japanese educational policy. That is, education in Japan has transformed from uniform education to education which puts importance on individuality. This has resulted in changing social values among the young and they have adopted a variety of life styles which differ from the traditional Japanese model. This shows that the education one gets influences adult life in various ways.

The high development of science and technology has completely changed adult lives. For instance, the rapid advancement of technology globalizes our industries and leads to the standardization of people's value, in other words, vast ethnic, cultural and national differences are not as obvious as they once were. It is also true that the way of life of people in Western countries, where everyone enjoys a variety of life styles, has penetrated Japanese society. It is not an exaggeration to say that we are now abandoning the traditional Japanese way of adult life, and adopting the Western or Global way of thinking. This change in the Japanese way of thinking has had an integral effect on adult life in Japan.

Developments in medicine have also affected our adult lives. The rapid development of medical science makes it possible for us to lead longer and healthier lives. Now we are

entering in aging society and it gives us a new role; we have to think about life after retirement or we have to take care of our aging parents.

Getting equal rights made women's lives change dramatically. After the 1960s Japanese women's attitudes changed and they were no longer "Yamato Nadeshiko", which means obedient and modest. Instead, they began to live as independent individuals. In the past, when a woman became an adult, she had to rely on her husband in order to live, but now she has to look for a job in order to live by herself.

When we consider the development in adulthood from an individual point of view, the long economic recession has affected men's roles as workers, the development of medical science has affected men's and women's roles as spouses, parents and children. Development in adulthood has been affected by the changes in social values and education as a result of globalization. It can thus be concluded that social and cultural factors have important implications on programs of adult education, and so it is essential for an educator making adult programs to be sensitive to the social expectation of the times and adjust their methods of programs accordingly.

[II] Review of the theories of Knowles and Mezirow

In this section I will discuss the theories of Knowles and Mezirow and look at how these 2 theories can assist educators in enhancing the process of adult learning.

Knowles' Theory; model of assumptions/system of concepts

The theory developed by Malcolm Knowles (1980) called "model of assumptions" (p.43) has given us a clear understanding of adulthood and the adult learner. He established the concept of "andragogy", meaning the art and science of helping adults learn, which he used in contrast to the term, "pedagogy", which means the art and science of helping children learn. Andragogy is based on five assumptions about the adult learner (Merriam and Cafarella, 1999, p.272):

1. As a person matures his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of self-directing human beings.
2. An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning.
3. The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.

4. There is a change in time perspective as people mature—from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus an adult is more problem centered than subject centered in learning (Knowles, 1980, pp.44-45).
5. Adults are motivated to learn by internal factors rather than external ones (Knowles and Associates, 1984, pp. 9-12).

Knowles (1984) describes that adult learners are voluntary learners who participate in learning not through obligation such as people undertaking compulsory education, but under their own initiative. Therefore they are sensitive about the outcome of their learning as for how it may improve their actual lives or how interesting the programs are. It is a common feature of adult learners that they ask how learning reflects their accumulated experience and whether there is a chance to make use of their learning or not. Knowles is right when he points out that adult learners participate in learning activities in relation to their social role or age.

Thus, Knowles gives us a clear understanding of adult learning, but some people question whether Knowles' idea of andragogy can be considered a "theory" of adult learning.

Hartree (1985) criticizes:

while many adult educators might accept that the principles of adult teaching and conditions of learning which he[Knowles] involves have much to offer, and are in a sense descriptive of what is already recognized as good practice by those in the field, conceptually Knowles has not presented a good case for the validity of such practice....Although he appears to approach his model of teaching from the point of view of a theory of adult learning, he does not establish a unified theory of learning in a systematic way (pp.206-207).

Brookfield (1986) also argues that three of the assumptions are disputable when drawing inferences for practice: self-direction is more a desired outcome than a given condition, and being problem centered and desiring immediate application can lead to a narrow, complex view of learning.

There are also criticisms against Knowles' theory that andragogy, with all its technological implications for instruction, adult learning is also applicable to childhood learning. In *Andragogy Versus Pedagogy* in 1980, Knowles adjusted his theory, and as Merriam and Caffarella (1999) point out, there are also some inconsistencies in his updated version of andragogy-pedagogy into one comprehension. Also, Brookfield (1986) points out, his reformulation from a dichotomy to a comprehensive theory only added to the conceptual confusion. Mori (2000) argues that the way Knowles compares andragogy with pedagogy is too simple and divides them in dichotomy. There is a clear division between them but

educational elements in andragogy and pedagogy may interact with each other. Cross (1981, p.225) gives more severe criticism that “a continuum from pedagogy to andragogy really does not exist”.

As shown above, there are many criticisms of his theory. They are mostly criticisms about his view of the dichotomy between andragogy and pedagogy. It is true that in his earlier books, he simply contrasts pedagogy with andragogy as a dichotomy. I think we should not define pedagogy as something exclusively for children and andragogy for adults, because I believe pedagogy and andragogy developed simultaneously.

On the other hand, despite these rather harsh criticisms, it is true that the theory of Knowles gives educators or researchers a clear understanding of adult learning. First, he succeeds in clarifying andragogy and pedagogy and giving educators many hints of learner or teaching methods. As Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p.278) admit, “the implications for practice that Knowles draws for each of the assumptions are also considered to be good instructional practice for all ages, especially adults”. Secondly, his concept of facilitation gives us a clear definition of growth. As Finger and Asun (2001) assert:

The concept of facilitation pertains precisely to this ambiguous definition of growth, called self-directed learning. It is the role of facilitator to foster growth, development and self-directed learning, both in Rogers’ and in Dewey’s sense. The learner feels the intrinsic need to grow, and the facilitator clarifies his or her need, motivation and goals. In addition, the facilitator helps the person to take control of this process, by creating a favorable climate and environment. Finally, by blending the person’s experience with concrete situations, the facilitator also contributes to solving problems, thus shaping the environment in a way that is conducive to further growth (p. 69).

I believe Knowles’ theory contains numerous resources for both adult learners and adult educators. Knowles’ andragogy gives adult educators many useful ideas about learners or teaching methods. His concept of facilitating is helpful instruction for better understanding of adults as learners.

Mezirow’s Transformation Theory

Mezirow (1996) has devised an entirely developed theory of transformative learning. His theory is about how adults interpret their life experiences, how they make meaning of their lives. Learning is regarded as the process of adopting a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation in order to guide future action. The process of transformative learning is firmly anchored in life experience. All human beings have a need to

understand their experiences, to make sense of what is happening in their lives. He believes that people involved in adult education have a responsibility to promote critical reflection.

In their book, *Learning in Adulthood*, Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p.333) show us four issues from discussions and critiques of transformative learning; “the extent to which the theory takes context into account; whether the theory relies too heavily on rationality; the place of social action; and the educator’s role in facilitating transformative learning”. Among them I think the main weakness of his theory is in the sociocultural context. His view is rather personal as Akao (2001) points out, Mezirow’s theory, with its emphasis on individual transformation, is only applicable on a personal level, and he thinks of transformative learning as something removed from sociocultural, political and historical contexts. Also, Finger and Asun (2001, p.59) argue that “Mezirow’s theory lacks a sound connection between (individual) perspective transformation and social change”. I think this is true because from Mezirow’s viewpoint social change can come about only through an individual changing.

Finger and Asun (2001, p.54) state “His theory of ‘perspective transformation’ is certainly the most elaborate and intellectually the most social conceptualization of adult learning, linking such learning to social change”. In fact, his theory of reflection perspective transformation explains our learning explicitly and clearly. The fact that his concept of transformative learning has been taken up by many educators proves this. For Mezirow adult education is responsibility for precipitating, facilitating, and reinforcing the perspective transformation process. We should also pay attention to his writing about future challenges for adult educators. His efforts to “study the process, methods and product of this kind of education and to evaluate perspective transformation and its effects” (Mezirow, 1978, p.109) is surely beneficial to educators.

When we think of adult education, it is good in some degree to think of it separate from children’s learning such as pedagogy and andragogy because the concept of learning in adulthood is different from learning in childhood. In this sense it is important for adult educators to learn andragogy which focuses on the adult learner and life situations. On the other hand, adult learning and children’s learning have common features in regard to learning itself. Therefore, for educators, it is necessary to think from both pedagogical and andragogical perspectives. I support Illich’s (1973) idea about adult education that adult education is not just for adults. Rather, it is an alternative to the entire field of education, as neither institutions nor society can tell people what they need and what they have to learn. And I believe that in adult education further studies of the learning process and method are needed.

[III] Adult Learning: The Future

Recently more research has been done on the theories or principles of adult learning and more books about it have been published. Then, what should be the focus of future research about adult learners?

In the U.S., adult learning became popular in the 1970s. Since then it has developed within different fields such as adult education, community education and continuous education, which change their functions according to societal changes and in response to a variety of learning needs. Endo (2001) explains that in America, lifelong learning has been developed through points of view from various fields and supported by different methods of different institutions and organizations, even though all these fields share the common idea of the importance of lifelong learning. In the U.S. adults are now provided a variety of educational opportunities in formal and informal setting, and at private or public institutions. In Japan, the situation is quite different, where adult learning is usually government organized and takes place in formal settings. In other words, adult education is more political in nature.

The term, “lifelong integrated education” was introduced to Japan immediately after UNESCO advocated it in 1965. In Japan, the term lifelong intergraded education was translated into a phrase “lifelong learning” which means lifelong intergraded education. In 1987, Extraordinary Council pronounced the policy of promotion of lifelong learning. Soon after the law was put into practice in order to promote lifelong learning and then lifelong learning became widespread throughout the whole country. Since then, the government has been vigorously promoting the strategies for lifelong learning; now lifelong learning centers can be found in each prefecture or city and lifelong festivals are frequently held.

When we trace educational history, we find that Japan’s lifelong learning is based upon an old concept of “social education”. Whereas social education was only for a select group of adults lifelong learning gives educational opportunities to all adult. After UNESCO advocated lifelong integrated education, the basic concepts of social education were in need of revision, and this question of how to develop and promote lifelong learning became a primary concern for the Government. As in other countries, we face the common problems of how to establish the sound principles with regards to the current social and cultural conditions as well as past traditions. These issues haven’t been settled yet and will continue to be an issue of educational debate. Shimizu (2000) insists that “we must now

reorganize all Japanese educational systems including school education and adult education under the principle of lifelong learning” (p.16). As Shimizu points out, I think it is time for us to reconsider adult education from the overall educational system.

First, when we consider further research on adult education, we need an integrated study which includes an examination of the overall educational system. Researchers should focus on how or where we place adult education among the whole educational system.

Second, we need further research on adult learning itself, especially with regard from practical aspects of learners. There should be a research focuses on teaching methods based on the characteristics of adult learning.

It could be said that much of what we know about learning itself is derived from child learning. I believe that adult learners can be distinguished from child learners by the way in which context, and some aspects of the learning process intermingle in adulthood. Especially, sociocultural background, the stored life experiences, developmental concerns, and the nature of ensuing learning experiences converge to make learning in adulthood qualitatively unlike learning in childhood. As a result, the configuration of learning in adulthood becomes different from learning in childhood.

Daines, C. Daines and Graham (2002) argue that:

Until recently, it was generally assumed that adults continue to acquire new knowledge and skills in much the same way as they did when they were children. However, as we discover more about how the brain works, and investigate more closely what young people and adults actually do, it begins to look as if this view is over-simplistic.

It is not yet possible to say whether adult learning differs qualitatively and quantitatively from that of children in significant ways, though some believe that this is the case. Nevertheless, it does seem that people do have differing preferred learning styles, that they pass through a number of cognitive developmental stages and that some particular aspects of their memory performance may change with increasing age. Whatever the exact nature of the differences, there can be little doubt that, compared to children, adults bring a massive amount of acquired knowledge and experience to new learning situation. They possess considerable practical experience of the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, usually through problems solving, though little of this will have taken place in a classroom or with the help of a professional tutor (p.1).

I agree with their practical idea on learning in adulthood. The research should start from focusing on differing preferred learning styles not from comparing to child learning. I believe we should put more importance on practical theory than qualitative or quantitative theories which show the difference between child learning and adult learning.

The study of adult learning is a complex field because it is influenced by society and the times which are changing and moving. I think that there is still much to be learnt about adult education using various fields such as sociology, psychology and politics as a basis for research.

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