

Lifelong learning world comity

People's learning in urban

--- Creating a learning community in a City---

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In my speech, at first, I will introduce the Japanese experience in adult and community education based on the Adult and Community Education Act of 1949 and a “kôminnkan”, a community learning centre, one of the essential facilities of this Act. Through an introduction of a “kôminnkan”, I insist the necessity of developing a centre of meeting for inhabitants as a mean of enhancement. To explain this remark, I will also mention about the new trends of learning theories of adults. By this, I insist the possibility of constructing a learning community in urban. Lastly, I insist that lifelong learning should squarely tackle the problem of ESD by forming a new citizenship of people as a global citizen.

1. Adult and Community Education Act and a “kôminnkan”

First, I mention the Adult and Community Education Act. This Act, enforced in 1949, has made the basic condition of learning for a nation, but it is now under the process of reconstruction. And in the process of reconstruction, we have two aspects, such as the cultural one and the professional one. Today, I touch on the former one.

To continue, this Act determines the role of administrations, nation and municipality, to establish conditions of learning for a nation and inhabitants. The feature of this Act is that it premises the idea of community learning, by setting a small area for their action. The facility of community learning centre called a “kôminnkan” is the model.

To explain the general outline, a “kôminnkan” was born just after Japanese defeat of the World War II. To reconstruct the new society, the Government had intended to establish a place of meeting at every small municipality, where people can get

together and discuss about problems that they face in a community life. The target of this policy was mainly a farm village where people cultivate rice plants. In general, rice cultivation requires mutual help of people, such as the control of water and roads in the field..., etc. The Government had intended to utilize this tradition as a way of community self development. In this centre, learning activity is set as the core of community development.

In these days, the condition of a “kôminnkan” has changed drastically, but this communal feature is alive. The idea of a “kôminnkan” is accepted and spreads in under-developing countries in South-east Asia, like Vietnam and Laos and so on.

To show you the status quo, the number of “kôminnkan” rises to 17,143 in 2005. In comparing this with that of elementary school and junior high school, this number means that a “kôminnkan” is less than an elementary school but is more than junior high school. You can understand how this facility has spread out in Japan.

2. The urban type of a “kôminnkan with three stories

In these 60 years after the defeat of the War, there produced a huge change in the Japanese society and in a world of a “kôminnkan”, the new image was born. This is the urban type of “kôminnkan” developed from 1970s' that is called the “kôminnkan with three stories”.

This is an image of the “kôminnkan with three stories” and its concrete example in Okayama City. You may say that this one doesn't have really three stories. Yes, but what I say is the function and the idea of a “kôminnkan”.

At the first floor, rez-de-chaussée in French is arranged a meeting space, where everybody can come and spend time freely. We may call it as a drop-in centre in a town. As the image of this facility comes originally from a “well site” in a farm village, it may contain a romantic hope of warmth and sympathy, while talking about a big city like Shanghai and Tokyo.

From ancient time, people say that a city releases a person. But on the other hand, people who live in a city stay in hard isolation and sever solitude. The free space at the first floor of a “kôminnkan” is the place to conquer this problem by giving people

a place where they liberate him or herself and find a companion.

The second floor is the space for people's discussion. Inhabitants who found friends and companions will make next a group to talk insensibly and collectively about problems that they have. So at the second floor, many little rooms like a seminar room at a university will be furnished, to respond to this requirement.

The third floor is a people's university; in direct saying "my university". In continuing discussions, they might hit a brick wall. In a case like this, they may need to learn a scientific knowledge. Here we can find the idea of "knowledge as a power".

2-bis photographs

These are photographs of activities at one of the "kôminnkan" in Okayama City. Upper left one is the scene of the ending at a gathering. The upper right one is the scene of musical event which insist the necessity of economy in life. Lower left one is the scene of activities to examine living things in water at the source of the river which runs in Okayama City. Lower right one is the scene of international exchange. All these photos show the activity concerning ESD at the "Kôminnkan".

It may depend on the scale of a facility but roughly saying, at every "kôminnkan" in Japan, at least two or three staffs are stationed. Standing at the special position as the educational public servant, they develop many activities to enhance people's learning; it is not limited to an organization of courses and events, they play role of caring motivation of visitors and the community.

3. Functions of urban kôminnkan"

I explain more precisely the function of a "kôminnkan". From here I will paraphrase the term as the "community learning centre (CLC)", to generalize the function.

There are three points. One is to see a city life as a succession of problem solving process by inhabitants. In an urban life, we face with many problems in community life that oblige us to catch up with to live on. For instance, as I already mentioned

partly, there are hard Isolation and loneliness, problem of consumption, child-bringing up, education, aged people, handicapped persons, and foreign workers and their family, poverty..., etc. We know that in the “The Belem Framework for Action”, the necessity of creating an inclusive society is repeated again and again.

Second is to regard inhabitant as the subject of problem solving. In a case of CLC, users come to the facility, consciously or not, with some problems. When they walk toward CLC, they would have some motivations and at the back of the decision to come here; the worry about a child-bringing up or an aged person may be hidden. When they arrived at the first floor, persons with whom they meet and get friends, are also a person who has worries in the same way. And there, will emerge problems that they hold mutually. Exchanges will give them a clue to the solution.

Final is that to enhance people by learning is the essential view point of educational approach to problem solving process. But in this matter, the image that I mentioned at the third function of a “kôminnkan”, “my university”, should be reviewed. In these days, in a world of the science of education, they discuss about the limit of the school type education that remarks the transmission of knowledge from one side to another side as essential. They think that it is necessity to establish the self-directed type of learning”. To think of this problem in the case of CLC, it is needed to put importance on functions of the first and second floor.

4. Commercialism in lifelong learning and the globalization of knowledge

In 1990, the new regal system named “the Act on the improvement of systems for the promotion of lifelong learning” was enforced. This act, having the term of “lifelong learning”, is based on the commercialism and consumerism. The target of this policy was to develop the private sector of lifelong learning, like a cultural centre and a cram school. It seems that the government thinks of lifelong learning as a business.

We discuss about the influence of commercialism in a world of learning and worry about if it might not deprive learning opportunities of economical weak and marginal persons. And in addition, we have apprehension that the consumerism might not change the sense of learning itself because the economic principle of “demand and supply” will control it. From this principle, the formalization and the uniformity of the

intellect will be produced.

5. Comparison: Adult/Community Education Act & Lifelong learning Act

This is the table of comparison between two Acts. This table shows contradictions and inconsistency between the two.

To explain, in the “organizer” column, the respect of “public authority/private sector” is different. In ACEA, it is a local government who entirely takes the responsibility to the learning opportunity, but at the LLA, cultural enterprise plays this role.

In the “principle” column, the “public assistance/right to education of a nation” corresponds to the “commercialism/cultural business”.

In the “learning contents” column, “scientific knowledge” is same but these are different at the “problem solving/ hashed knowledge”. The reason that I say “hashed knowledge” is that, to the position of enterprises, whether sell or not to sell will be the ultimate interest and we apprehend the tendency that they might not neglect the issue of the knowledge. Knowledge mosaic might be produced.

At the “learner” column, “public” and “inhabitants” are corresponded. Difference exists here at, how to regard learners; as “public” or “a personal”. In a case of the LLA, where the agreement of the “demand and supply” is the main concern, the benefit theory will be applied and from the benefit principle, the personal charge system is introduced.

Finally, at the “area” column, the difference between “small area, regionalism” and “large area, globalization” is corresponded. I insist here that the knowledge that is bought and sold with money means a type of the globalization, the globalization in learning.

6. New trends and problems

In these twenty years, new trends concerning lifelong learning are produced in

Japan and the world.

First, in Japan, Non Profit Organization Act was enforced in 1998. This is an epoch-making event that enhances the citizens' initiative in a civil society that we can understand as a learning activity of "learning by doing".

Second, in a world, new theories on adult learning have developed. It may be needless to say, but we can line up the "andragogy" by M.Knowles, the "reflective learning theory" by J.Mezirow and "autoformation" by G. Pineau..., etc. I myself am now engaged in the work of translation of "Produire sa vie", the book written by G. Pineau.

Third, I want to mention the discussion on the "local intellect". Two years before, our Japan Society for the Research of Adult and Community Education has published the year book titled "possibilities of local intellect as lifelong learning". By using the key concept, "local intellect", we intended to establish the adverse idea to the "globalized intellect". In an age of Globalization, knowledge becomes universal, systematic, successive and codified and neglects the specificity, contingency, individuality and locality of knowledge. We call the knowledge with the latter feature "a local intellect". In this book, I wrote an article named "Life event and learning", being led by the indication of E. Morin, "Science with consciousness".

Final, we should remark changes of urban living, For example, we are surrounded with effects of the enlargement of gaps, expansion of multicultural society and getting worse of poverty..., etc. I insist again that lifelong learning should catch up with these challenges.

7. Conclusion: learning for a new citizenship under the Globalization

To conclude, I want to mention the necessity to pay attention to a new problem that lifelong learning is facing. Especially the problem of ESD; Education for Sustainable Development is urgent. It will be needless to explain it again and actually we don't have time, but it has a meaning to emphasis the importance of this problem.

I think that the ESD, triggered off from unusual in natural environment, requires us to form a new citizenship in an age of Globalization. From the view point of the ability

formation, the development of people's new abilities and aptitudes are needed, like this. To assume this role will give the very important "raison d'être to lifelong learning. To enumerate abilities,

- ① The sense of the person concerned.**
- ② Problem discovering ability.**
- ③ The sense of coexistence.**
- ④ The sense of mutuality.**
- ⑤ Participation and the sense of initiative.**
- ⑥ Empowerment.**
- ⑦ Responsibility for future.**

In brief, these are very new abilities that we don't have materialize yet. But these abilities and aptitudes are indispensable to a sustainable future. It is to form a global citizen.