

Lifelong Learning : Universities and Adult Education

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This paper argues that the driving force of social change in the contemporary world is economic globalisation, which has demanded and more highly educated work force. It discusses six major changes that are occurring in traditional university education, as a result, and notes that universities have now become a site where adults learn. Universities are becoming institutions of lifelong learning. In the final section traditional adult education is reviewed, which is also becoming lifelong learning, and the education of older adults is discussed.

The structures of society are largely determined by the powerful forces operating at its centre. Education has never been at the centre of society and so its structures and functions have always responded to the demands of the centre. For instance, the content of curricula have always reflected those forms of knowledge that the individuals at the centre determined to be worthwhile for transmitting to future generations. Bourdieu (1973, p. 73) captured this position clearly:

In view of the fact that the apprehension and possession of cultural goods as symbolic goods (along with the symbolic satisfaction which accompany an appropriation of this kind) are possible only to those who hold the code for making it possible to decipher them or, in other words, that the appropriation of symbolic goods presupposes the instruments of appropriation, it is sufficient to give play to the laws of cultural transmission for cultural capital to be added to cultural capital and for the structure of the distribution of cultural capital between the social classes to be thereby reproduced.

However, there has been one notable exception to that in the history of education; adult education has, until very recently, sought to respond to the needs of the people. Indeed, in Western Europe and North

America for many years, adult education was regarded as having a 'needs-meeting' approach. It was both educational and developmental much of it was designed to assist the help the people develop their own lives and communities. Many of its main advocates were social reformers (see Welton, 2001 - for a good example from Canada). Other examples of this can be found in the history of university extension in North America, in extra-mural education in the United Kingdom and popular education in parts of Western Europe. Its philosophy has predominantly been one of human development so that individuals could learn and, perhaps, contribute to the common good.

But in recent years this form of adult education an education for the people's own development has been fighting a rearguard action for survival in the face of the dominant pressures in contemporary society and, despite its noble past and proud traditions, it seems to be losing the battle. The forces at the centre of society are converting it to a form of education for employability and for employees continuing to keep abreast in the ever-developing world of commercial knowledge. In this paper, I want to trace some of these changes, illustrate how they are affecting not only adult education but, especially, the post-school educational system and I want to conclude by posing the question: is education about human development or about human resource development? The paper has three parts: the first examines globalisation and the knowledge society, the second looks the changes that

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are occurring in the educational system with especial reference to higher education, and the third asks questions about where the philosophy of traditional adult education is now to be found.

Globalisation and the Knowledge Society

Globalisation is fundamentally an economic phenomenon which lies at the centre of the global society, the effects of which spread from the West throughout the whole of the culture of society - of which education forms but one part. It is inappropriate to explore the various theories of globalisation in any depth here, but Weede (1990) has isolated three: Galtung's (1971) 'structural theory of imperialism'; Wallenstein's (1974) 'world system approach' and Bornschiers (1980) idea of 'investment dependence'. In a way they all relate to the power of those who control the economic institution both financial and intellectual capital and who employ technology and, especially information technology to produce their desired outcomes. Indeed, when this is combined with rapid transport systems, the world has been changed into a global village, although the term 'village' is also a little misleading since the world cultures are far less homogeneous than those of a single village. Even so, the capitalist system and the international division of labour do affect the cultures of the world. In many ways, there is a process of standardisation (Beck, 1992) or McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1993). At the same time, this process is not uni-directional since peoples and cultures seek to re-establish their own identities in this world process, and to create a counter process which results in a degree of fragmentation. Robertson (1995) also recognises that there is an interplay between the global and the local, and he introduces us to the concept of glocalisation.

It is those societies, however, that are at the centre of economic globalisation which might be seen as the knowledge societies: it is these that Daniel Bell (1973) first called the post-industrial societies. For him, knowledge is the fundamental resource for such societies, especially theoretical knowledge (Bell, 1973, p. 14), and as Stehr (1994, p. 10) pointed out that when these societies emerge they signal a fundamental shift in the structure of the economy, since the

primacy of manufacturing is replaced by knowledge. It is not knowledge *per se* that is significant to the knowledge society but scientific including social scientific - knowledge (Stehr, 1994, pp. 99-103) since this underlies the production of new commodities and services and, consequently, has economic value. Knowledge in itself has no intrinsic value, it is only its use-value as a scarce resource which is significant. Indeed, new knowledge is a scarce resource. Every marginal addition to the body of scientific knowledge is potentially valuable in the knowledge economy. Not all societies, however, are knowledge societies some are agricultural and others manufacturing, which has produced an international division of labour.

It is widely recognised that transnational companies relocate their production in the countries that are most likely to generate greater returns on their capital investment, but with the development of information technology and rapid transportation, they are able to operate as single entities in policy terms. At the same time, this has not occurred totally; no manufacturing company, for instance, has totally deserted the first world for the third, for a variety of reasons one of which might be the standard of education and training of the work force.

Indeed, Reich (1993) has divided work into three main categories: routine production services (repetitive jobs following standardised production procedures), in-person services (person-to-person supervised service occupations) and symbolic analysts (knowledge workers, researchers, designers, and so forth). The first undertake routine production, the second are involved in the service occupations and the third are knowledge-based workers. In the West, the knowledge-based jobs are growing in number and in proportion of the workforce as the workers' expertise is being used, but since it is also a service society there is also a growth in these occupations, many of which are still extremely routine and highly monitored. However, the nature of the knowledge used is changing at a tremendously rapid rate. The speed of knowledge change is increasing, generated by the forces of the competitive global market.

As Stehr indicates, it is scientific knowledge that underlies the knowledge society and it is this which changes rapidly. As early as 1926 Scheler (1980, p.73) tried to classify types of knowledge according to the speed by which they change. He produced seven

categories, of which the final two were positive knowledge of mathematics and natural sciences and humanities and technological knowledge. The other five were: myth and legend; knowledge of natural language; religious knowledge; mystical knowledge; philosophical-metaphysical knowledge. The final two, he regarded, as artificial since they changed so rapidly and never had time to become embodied in a society's culture before they disappeared, while the other forms of knowledge were embedded in the culture and changed more slowly. These other forms of knowledge have, consequently, been relegated to a less significant place in capitalist knowledge societies. These processes have been very significant for adult and higher education, something that is very apparent in Kerr *et al's* (1973, p.47) discussion of the nature of higher education in the contemporary society:

The higher educational of industrial society stresses the natural sciences, engineering, medicine, managerial training whether private or public and administrative law. It must steadily adapt to new disciplines and new fields of specialization. There is a relatively smaller place for the humanities and the arts, while the social sciences are strongly related to the training of managerial groups and technicians for the enterprise and the government. The increased leisure time of industrialism, however, can afford a broader public appreciation of the humanities and the arts.

Of course, they were wrong about the nature of society but they were right about the emphasis being placed on scientific subjects, albeit in the post-industrial society. The dominant discourse about knowledge in knowledge societies is scientific, so that it appears that all knowledge has to be scientific, or at least social scientific.

However, if knowledge changes so rapidly, how can we decide whether it is correct? Traditionally, there have been three ways of legitimating knowledge: by rational argument, empirical discovery and pragmatism (Scheffler, 1965). Underlying both Modernity and, therefore, science is the idea of instrumental rationality, of which pragmatism is an important articulation. The point is that in corporations in global capitalism pragmatic knowledge is crucial, or as Lyotard (1984, pp.41-53) puts it 'performative'.

This has meant, however, that in the West, the significance of technical knowledge has been widely utilised and the first world has become to a considerable extent a knowledge society and a service

society, while a great deal of its actual manufacturing has been relocated elsewhere in the world. In terms of the international division of labour, countries in the much of the non-western world have not developed as great a proportion of knowledge workers in their work force as Western countries and they have been forced to retain a greater proportion of routine production workers. Transnational companies are locating some of their manufacturing processes in these areas. In addition, many countries throughout the world are developing their service industries, such as tourism, in order to attract people, especially from the first world.

Since one of the driving forces of the global competitive market is knowledge, which has traditionally been the province of the universities, it is not surprising that they are having to adapt to the idea of lifelong learning and that the adult work force is having to continue its education, so that adult education is also being affected. Consequently, these two sectors of education are beginning to merge and lifelong education, or lifelong learning, is becoming a significant factor in many countries' educational systems.

The Changes in the Educational System

There are a number of major changes in the educational system as lifelong education emerges that we have documented elsewhere (Jarvis, Holford and Griffin, 1998), but I would like to discuss six of them here: from public to private; from education to lifelong learning; from liberal to vocational; from the few to the many; from single discipline to integrated and practical knowledge; from knowledge as truth to knowledge as relative. In each case I want to highlight both the changes to university and to adult education.

From Public to Private

We have always been accustomed to thinking of school, college and university as the sites for learning. In many countries of the world, both school and university educators have been state employees occasionally the same is true for adult educators, but this was less frequent. Education was a major concern

of the State, although the churches have rightly always claimed a role. But things have changed over the past few years while those educators may still be State employees, there are now many educators employed in private corporations, private educational institutions and so on. We are seeing the growth of private universities, even corporate ones (Jarvis, 2001a) and education is fast becoming a commodity that we can purchase on the market indeed, we can get a great deal of teaching and learning material from the Worldwide Web. Universities and colleges are being forced to compete with private enterprises in an education market, and are sometimes not being tremendously successful. During this process the main trust of traditional liberal adult education has been subsumed within the broader context of education for employment, although there are significant examples of how it is rediscovering its identity and re-emerging.

From Education to Lifelong Learning

Traditionally formal education has been a process whereby the older generation passes down to the young ones the knowledge and skill which the former has considered worthwhile. In as much as it did this, and no other social agency performed this function, it had high status, with teachers also being very highly regarded in society and those individuals employed in the upper echelons of education having very high social status. While it might be claimed that this is still one of the functions of children's education, it is harder to make this claim for post-school education. Indeed, post-school education can now last a lifetime. More significantly, there are fewer guardians of 'correct' knowledge since it is possible to learn from a very wide variety of information transmitting agencies. We can learn from books, from correspondence courses, from audio recordings, from the Web and so on. Indeed, we can learn the same things as the formal institution might have provided us but without being enrolled in it. For instance I might have enrolled in a Chinese class to learn the language before coming here, or I might have bought a CD to teach myself: the former is educational but the latter is self-directed learning. We can also do this throughout the whole of our lives there is no upper age limit to accessing the Web! Now the emphasis is on lifelong learning and

universities are having to recognise that adults of all ages, and not just young adults, want to benefit from continued learning.

This is forcing them to re-think their position in society and also to consider the type of students who might enrol with them; indeed, in UK the Dearing Report (1997) was concerned with making universities institutions of lifelong learning. In addition, Campbell (1984) has shown that that there were more adults enrolled in universities in Canada from 1974 onwards than there were young adults. Once adults come on to the campus in large numbers the traditional organisation has to change; now there has to be new types of courses; new ways of teaching; part-time study; courses arranged at convenient times for working adults to attend; the facilities for adult students, and so on. Universities are finding these new demands very hard to respond to.

By contrast, adult educators have been delighted at the way greater access to all forms of education has been granted to adults, but they are frequently frustrated by the inability of universities and colleges to adapt to these demands. At the same time, they do not welcome some of the other changes that are occurring, as we shall discuss below.

From Liberal to Vocational

The driving forces of these changes have been from within the global economy which has resulted in both a knowledge and a learning society. As hi-tech industry and commerce has demanded a higher level of entry qualifications, so universities have been forced to increase the size of their entry. From a small elite entry (in many countries but not the United States), universities are now being forced to accept as many as 30% or 40% of school leavers and more programmes are becoming vocationally orientated, as that quotation from Kerr *et al* above has shown. Indeed, it might be claimed that education is the most certain route to employability. However, this is not the only place where expansion has occurred an increasing number of post-graduate programmes on a part-time and, even distance education, basis are emerging. Knowledge workers, and some service workers, are being required to update their qualifications as new knowledge emerges and new techniques are demanded. Universities,

which have always been orientated towards the high status professions are merely having to adapt their curricula to the new high status occupations. In addition, an increasing number of practitioner doctorates are being introduced (Jarvis, 1999).

Adult education, on the other hand has been more liberal and community oriented. Many adult educators have seen their role in terms of helping the underprivileged through the provision of educational activities in a variety of forms from adult basic education to second chance education. They have also seen their role as providing education for those who those who have wanted to expand their learning beyond the sphere of their employment, and to helping individuals learn how to develop their own communities through teaching them the necessary knowledge and skills. Now, however, the education of adults is being increasingly directed to vocationally oriented programmes and away from those which are people or community centred. Yet, as we shall show in the final section of this paper, there are still new areas in which liberal adult education might grow.

From the Few to the Many

It is clear from the above discussion that whereas once we were hoping to see education for everybody in society, now the demand is increasingly becoming higher education for all. This change is, naturally, only occurring in the knowledge economies of the world but it is one which will no doubt permeate through many other societies. However, there is a danger here. Education has traditionally been more responsive to change than an initiator of it, although this is not universally true. Nevertheless, if the educational provision of a society produces more educated people than a society's economy can employ, it could cause problems for that society since having a highly educated but under-employed work force can be destabilising.

From single discipline to integrated and practical knowledge

Universities have traditionally taught their students individual academic disciplines, so that they learn mathematics, or physics, or philosophy, and so on.

Occasionally students have studied two subjects but rarely more. It has generally been the aim of university education to produce students who have the theoretical mastery of a subject. However, theoretical knowledge in a single academic discipline is of little value to the world of work and so changes are being forced on universities. Increasingly new degrees are being introduced in areas of practice, rather than in the theoretical disciplines, so that degrees in education, in nursing, journalism and so on have been emerging over the past few years. Now educational knowledge, nursing knowledge, journalism knowledge and so on have become more significant but this knowledge is both integrated and practical. I recognise that many students studying fields practice, also study the context within which it occurs which may be academic-discipline-based, e.g. the social history of journalism, but this is incidental to learning to become a journalist or a teacher, and so on. It will be recalled that Lyotard (1984) pointed out that in this age knowledge is legitimated by its performativity.

This change has meant that higher education institutions are now having to take skills into account in their programmes rather than leaving these so-called less important matters to later when the students have left university. This is changing the nature of higher education quite considerably in some, but not all, countries. Indeed, we are seeing many new teaching methods occurring, such as practice-based learning (see Wang *et al.* 2000). By contrast, adult education has always been practical, or as Knowles (1980, p.44) frequently pointed out when he was discussing andragogy, immediately relevant to adults lives. Now universities are having to make their courses more relevant to their learners.

Knowledge as Truth to Knowledge as Relative

As we pointed out above, positive and scientific knowledge is changing rapidly, and this raises major questions about the nature of truth. It also raises questions about the nature of theory. Where knowledge is legitimated by empiricism, then there is less likely to change. But where it is legitimated by pragmatism, i.e. it works, the more likely it is to change as the world in which it is practised changes. Knowledge is changing all the time, or as Lyotard argues, it has

become narrative. Consequently, it is much harder to contemplate applying theory to practice if the practice situation is always changing. Indeed, it has been argued that in these situations, theory emerges from practice (Jarvis, 1999) rather than the other way around.

With the emergence of lifelong education, both higher and adult education are having to change. Higher education is having to learn to adjust to the world of the adult, which it is finding hard to do but adult education seems to have lost a some of its unique characteristics as education is becoming more employment orientated, and so we now need to re-examine traditional adult education.

Traditional Adult Education

Adult education still retains its traditional role especially in societies whose economies are less dependent on knowledge. Indeed, throughout much of the world it still retains these functions and adults are still being encouraged to return to learning. Adult basis education has not lost its significance in a world in which illiteracy rates are still very high.

But in the world of lifelong learning a new one role is appearing the education of older adults. Since the early 1960s in the USA and since the 1970s in Europe older adults have been seeking education in considerable numbers. In some parts of the world, people are living longer, enjoying better health and having more money, so that they have many years of leisure beyond their work life. Considerable evidence shows that they can keep on learning and, in fact, in America there is a large research programme investigating, amongst other things, the learning of centenarians. Not only are some of them still learning some are still working (Purdy, 1995). In America, Institutions for Learning in Retirement and Elderhostels, and in Europe, Universities of the Third Age abound, some with hundreds of members and large programmes of activities and learning. In the United Kingdom, there is a programme called *Older and Bolder* which is aimed not only a heightening public awareness of older learning but also of acting as an advocate for it in the field of public policy.

It is these institutions of third age that we find

liberal adult education flourishing and assuming new forms in response to the needs and demands of this older age group. No longer is there pressure to study work-based subjects, and members of the third age can now choose to study topics from the whole spectrum of knowledge in order to follow their own interests. Many examples of the activities are recorded in studies of elder learning (see Jarvis, 2001b *inter alia*), while Manheimer (1999) actually discussed teaching philosophy to third age students and others mount courses in all forms of physical education. In addition, non-governmental organisations have developed specialising in important areas of older people's lives, such as the *Pre-Retirement Association of Great Britain*, which runs courses preparing people for retirement and actually trains others to run similar courses.

Both on the continent of Europe and in the United States, universities have supported these activities whilst in UK, with one notable exception, the universities have been less involved. Indeed, it is part of the policy of the Universities of the Third Age in the United Kingdom to remain independent of the university system and there is a certain logic in this since they seek to keep clear of the constraints that institutionalised education would place upon them.

At the same time, universities might continue their engagement in liberal adult education with especial programmes for the third age. But there is another activity in which the universities might become more involved: higher degrees and research degrees for third ages. In my own university, for instance, we have had a number of retired people, or people nearing retirement, who have embarked on PhD research for a variety of reasons, including the desire to continue with their intellectual pursuits. Others pursue taught courses at both undergraduate and post-graduate level for not other reason than the enjoyment of learning.

Conclusion

Whilst is some ways these changes which have brought the education of adults into the mainstream of educational and educational policy, adult educators themselves have found it hard to adjust to being in the mainstream and many have remained at the margins. As Kett (1994, p. xviii) has written.

Today no one can plausibly describe adult education as a marginal activity, but professional adult educators have become increasingly marginal to the education of adults.

Whilst his observation has more than a little truth about it, it reflects the difficulties adult educators have had with the changes that have occurred. But it would probably be even more true to say that universities themselves had have considerable difficulty in adjusting to the fact that they now have multitudes of new students who are placing great demands on them both intellectually and structurally. Universities will almost certainly emerge as institutions of lifelong learning. Nevertheless, the changes that they are going to experience are going to be extremely painful for some of them, but they need to keep before them the philosophy of an education for human development rather than merely for human resource development.

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