

The university's new role in aging society

——The elderly's education and re-socialization

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Abstract

The concept of socialization has always been used to talk about people's growth process. It is a process to acquire the social nature, such as social behavior style, norms, social role, etc. as youths become adults. For the elderly who have worked as a company person for a long time, the contact and methods to re-enter the society will have a significant reduction when they are retired. They need re-socialization to rebuilding sociality once again.

Taking their longevity into consideration, how to make the second life meaningful becomes more and more important for lots of elderly people. The fundamental cause of anxiety for the elderly is that life becomes longer, but the agency for socialization is disorganized and social expectations become ambiguous. Traditional socialization "agency" includes families, schools, workplaces, peer groups and communities, etc. Due to the changes in the overall social structure, traditional seniority lifestyles can no longer effective. With the development of nuclear families and sparseness of community relations, the society cooperation will be greatly cut off, and the "place" for the elderly's re-socialization is being collapsed. At the same time, the elderly's status and authority will be lost after leaving the workplace.

Recently, Japanese universities are actively participating in various social collaboration activities. For example, universities collaborate with companies, conduct joint industry-university projects and regional exchanges, and promote exchanges and cooperation between universities across the globe actively. In the face of the aging society, what role should the university assume? This article hopes to be inspired by summarizing Japan's third-age education model.

Keywords: Re-socialization, Retired elderly, Third-age education, University

1. Introduction

"Long life and centenary" is a great dream that human beings always desire. However, with the aging of the population, the declining birthrate and the continuous rise of the population, people's attitude towards longevity has changed dramatically. Among them, in addition to the reasons of labor reduction, pension burden, and social demographic structure, there is another very important reason that cannot be ignored. It is that we are worried about the elderly's "anomie behavior". The literal meaning of "anomie" is interpreted as losing the norm or having no standard. The root of the problem is the misconduct caused by the lack of sociality. Simply speaking, it's the behavior which violates social common sense and social moral requirements, or even regulations,

ethical rules and laws.

At present, the Chinese Cultural Revolution generation is aging. When they gradually fade away from the main social roles and the economy is relatively affluent, the question of how to live the life after the age of 60 will be highlighted. In this process, “square dance” is debuted. In China, the woman who is more than 40 years old is called Da Ma, which often accompanied by such connotations as begin old, importunate, and noisy, and other bad meanings. When the night came, several groups of Da Ma go to the square, playing the music and dance until late night. They are always the target of public criticism because of the trouble brought by them to the surrounding residents.

This phenomenon indicates that they hoped to find the happiness that they couldn't enjoyed when they were young by “singing and dancing”. But the underlying reason is their reflection on “want to find something lost” or “do something for the future” and the anxiety about the future. This collective psychological behavior, once the goal is lost or the economic foundation is shaken, can easily be transformed into a strong aggressive behavior against others and society. But these self-reflection and anxiety, through the establishment of new interpersonal relationships by learning and re-socialization, can encourage the elderly to take the initiative to participate in society.

Japan, which is close to China, is also facing the “anomie behavior” problem in the elderly. According to the Japanese Cabinet Office's 2017 White Paper on Crime, the number of criminals aged 65 and over is significantly higher than other age groups, reaching 46,977, 3.7 times of 1997. As for the crime types, the proportion of thefts is up to 66.0%, followed by the crime of encroachment by 22.4%, these two crime types are superimposed to about 90% of the criminals of the elderly; from the basic situation of the perpetrators, Most of them are physically and mentally healthy, living alone, and lack of interpersonal relationships. In a word, they lack “sociality”.

Sociality is the basic attribute of human beings and the basic common sense and ability that individuals should have in social life. Social cultivation is the fundamental purpose and requirement of the socialization process. Therefore, this paper hopes to start from the specialized socialization institution--school, the old-age education, and analyze the social restoration and reconstruction in the old age from the perspective of socialization.

2. Multiplied life length and the disintegration of socialization agencies

As the Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari described in *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*: "For modern human being, death is a technical problem that we can and should solve." According to the data provided in the book *LIFE SHIFT - Life Strategy in the Hundred Years of Life*, "Half-child born in Japan in 2007 will reach 107 years old"(p.1)¹Even after retiring at the age of 65, there are still nearly 30 years of life to live. How we should we spend a long period of old age, is a new problem that must be faced in the new era. In particular, Japan's “baby-boom generation”, which has entered the old age, is the main supporting force of Japan's

rapid economic growth. Those who have been called “corporate fighters” now face a huge change in life rhythm and disjoint after retirement, which can become a huge issue in the new stage of life.

First, they need to leave far away from the workplace they used to. They can’t go to the company as usual. They even can’t contact their colleagues as usual. Once retired, familiar colleagues, companies, and landscapes on the way to work are instantly strange and distant. So, they are idle at home, doing nothing, or indulging in alcohol, or holding a TV not willing to let go...

Second, it’s difficult to assimilate into the family. Concerning how much impact will the retirement of corporate fighters take on the family, we can see a clue at the “elderly divorce” and “retirement divorce” before the bursting of the economic bubble. The long-term division of gender roles makes men almost completely detached from social networks outside the enterprise, while women are responsible for maintaining social relationships within and outside the family. Therefore, most women have their own social circles, and once men retired, it is difficult for them to find the fulcrum of life, and at the same time they will break the lifestyle and rhythm that their wives are used to, which results in confrontation and contradiction between aged husband and wife. The family is the first pass to undertake the impact, but also gradually closed the door, leaving the retired elderly outside.

Last but not least, it’s difficult to assimilate into the community. Until the retirement, corporate fighters did not have the worry of "nowhere to go". The community is usually placed at the end of the social network and is a dispensable existence. After retirement, the time spent in the place of residence will be greatly extended. The "corporate fighters" who were busy with their work and had no regard for neighborhood and community relations will realize the importance of the neighborhood relationship only when they retired. But even if they now want to enter the community relationship circle, they can’t find the entrance for various reasons.

The workplace, family, and community are the three important agencies for the re-socialization of the elderly. With the development of the times and the transformation of the social structure, the functions of socialization are constantly weakening or disappearing. In contrast, the aging population ratio and the re-socialization needs of the elderly are gradually rising. As a specialized socialization agency, the school has the responsibility and conditions to rebuild the environment for the elderly and help the elderly to achieve re-socialization.

3. The new role of universities in aging society

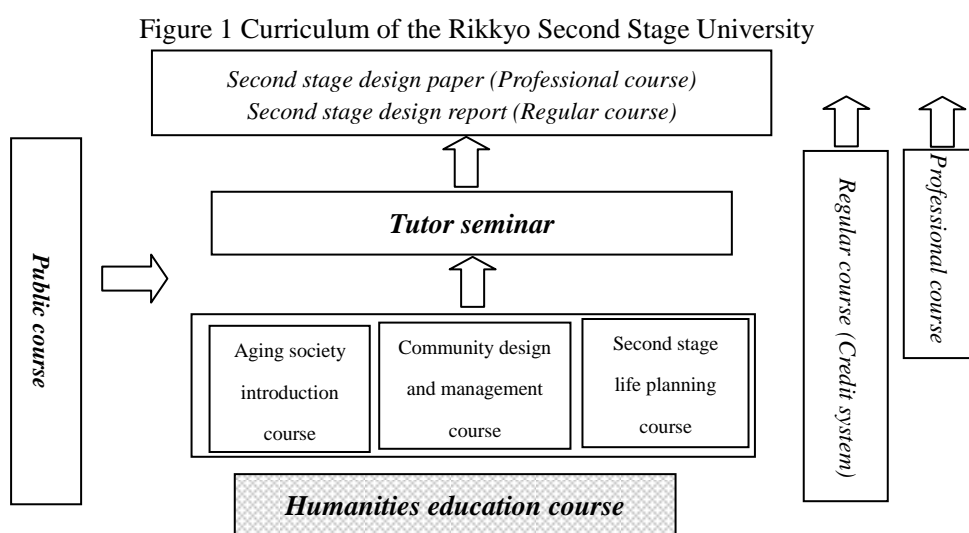
Talking about the experience of supporting the elderly’s lifelong learning, universities dominated French model and the self-disciplined learning UK model is the most representative. However, compared with the European and American models and experiences, Japan has a similar cultural background and living habits with China, and also the country with the highest proportion of the elderly population in the world. The application and reception of their

experience in the elderly's education would be easier in Chinese society. At present, there are three major modes in Japan relying on the colleges and universities to support lifelong learning for the elderly:

3.1 The comprehensive university's humanities education course

Take the Rikkyo Second Stage University as an example. This university only recruits students over 50 years old. And they only need to take a written examination and an interview. Elderly students can get a certificate of completion by completing enough credits in 1 year. After graduation, if you want to continue your studies, you can change your major or continue to take the advanced courses.

The curriculum is divided into two parts: 1) Public general courses. There are public education courses for all students, including literature, society, history, humanities, etc., students can take multiple courses. 2) Tutor seminar. The mentor as the core to form a discussion group, regularly organize professional explanations and discussions, and the students independently choose the topic to write the thesis.



From: Rikkyo Second Stage University' home page (<http://english.rikkyo.ac.jp/academics/lifelong/secondstage/>).

As the core of the course, there are also two ways to complete the graduation thesis: 1) Close cooperation type. Two or more students jointly select a title for research. In the process, they form a cooperation group with other members in the same class, or invite other mentor's students, to find information, investigate interviews, study and discuss, and jointly complete the graduation thesis under the leadership of the research team leader. 2) Decentralized cooperation type. Two or more students jointly select a topic for research. However, team members can choose their own perspectives or interest point to research. In the group discussion, although the perspectives are different, the research topics are the same, and the ideas and arguments from each member will inspire each other. 3) Independent research type. Students who are not willing to form a group can of course choose a thesis topic based on their own interests. However, it is also necessary to participate in seminars organized by the instructors, and to present their research progress in the class, and to give opinions and suggestions to each other.

The humanities education courses of a comprehensive university like the Rikkyo Second Stage University creates a new teaching environment for the elderly students and helps the elderly to enter the “Second Stage of Life”. The elderly are once again assembled on the university campus, so that the network of relationships between people, the community and the society can be rebuilt, and through this platform, they will become a new force for participating in social activities.

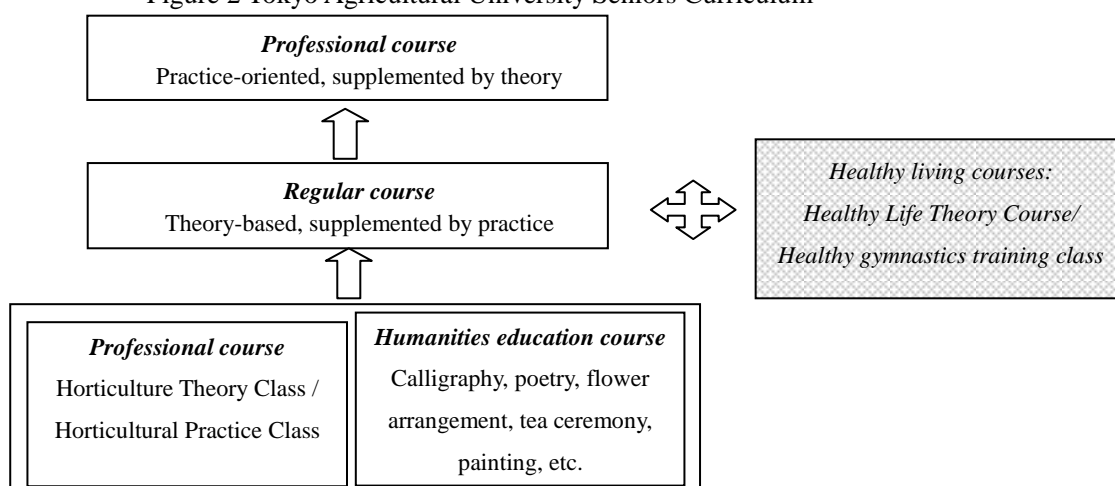
3.2 Professional university’s skills development course

Here take the Green Academy of Tokyo Agricultural University as an example. Although their senior curriculum does not clearly stipulate the age of the students, it is required that the applicants should be “senior generations”, that is, the elderly group. Admission requires an interview. There is no strict credit requirement during the school year, but the professional course is a compulsory course. In addition, the Green Academy students can take two humanities education courses a year.

Tokyo Agricultural University’s senior curriculum includes two types of courses: One is Professional courses, and the other is Life health course.

Professional courses consist of two parts: horticultural theory class and horticultural practice class. The primary stage emphasizes theoretical teaching, including the optical principles of plant growth, the identification of water, soil, and the classification of plants. Regular courses such as planting, weeding and fertilization are combined. Professional courses focus on internships, practice. At this stage, there are more opportunities to participate in planting practices. Of course, in order to help the students master the basic theory, the horticultural theory will also be explained along with practices. After completing the regular course (1 year), you can continue to apply for professional courses (1 year).

Figure 2 Tokyo Agricultural University Seniors Curriculum



Summarized from: Tokyo University of Agriculture’s Green Academy’ homepage.

<http://www.nodai.ac.jp/seijingakou/index.html>.

Life health course includes life health theory class and gymnastics training class, which is mainly to help students maintain physical fitness. After all, gardening practice needs physical

strength. The Life Health Class is a fee-based course, regardless of the primary and advanced level, because the time schedule does not conflict with other courses, it can be combined.

Because of the professionalism and practicality of the course, many students actively participate in volunteer groups during their school years. After graduation, most of the students will remain in the volunteer group, or they will be recommended by the “Alumni Association” to become active members at the community. The humanities education curriculum continues to be the centripetal force after graduation, attracting graduates to communicate independently, forming tea ceremony classrooms, painting classrooms, calligraphy classrooms, etc.

3.3 Short course for interest lecture

There are many schools offering interest-based short-term courses in Japan. This article takes the open lectures of a famous university, Keio University, as an example. The school's open lectures are basically membership-based, and non-members' tuition fees are correspondingly higher. There are no entrance exams or interviews, no age restrictions, and different seminars are offered every quarter. Members can choose any courses from the public lectures only if you are interested and have enough time.

The types of lectures include: Literary lectures, Japanese history and culture lectures, World history and culture lectures, Lectures on philosophy and religion, Life and health lectures, Lectures on modern social sciences, Lectures related to business and qualification certificates, and foreign language lectures, etc.

This kind of lecture-type short-term courses like Keio University has become very popular in many universities in Japan. The teaching content is based on hobbies and interests, there is no age limit, and there are no exams and credit requirements. But there are almost no interactions between teachers and students, as well as between classmates. The seemingly rich and varied lecture arrangements are actually loose and unscientific. Therefore, it is difficult for students to acquire new interpersonal relationships and social roles in the process of participating in this type learning activities. Except for expanding the activity space of the students to a certain extent, it does not have much influence on the behavior of the elderly. However, the advantages of this elderly education model are low tuition fees, loose management, and light learning burden.

4. Discussion

In the process of individual's socialization, the school has always been the most professional social agency. Durkheim held that education is the most effective means of socialization. Just as he had mentioned in his book *Social Division of Labor*, the function of education is to maintain the social order by providing people with the norms and frameworks. School is an important socialization agency, and the same hold good for the elderly's education. It helps the elderly identify and discover their social roles in group activities.

First of all, the elderly's education has its prescribed "Passing Etiquette ". The opening ceremony and graduation ceremony are typical "Passing Etiquette ", in which the beginning of

socialization and its final results are witnessed by the group. The opening ceremony allows the elderly to identify their social identity and social roles from the beginning of their enrollment; the graduation ceremony effectively urged the elderly to actively think about the responsibilities and obligations that must be assumed in the new stage of life. For the elderly, life in the university will bring a buffer and hesitation period to the retired seniors, during which, avoiding the sense of loss and uselessness of sudden retirement, they can have enough time and environment for thinking about and preparing for future life.

Second, the elderly' education can enrich the social role of the elderly. The collective life in the university is rich and varied, and each activity is a real role-playing. In each activity, the elderly can get a new role. This not only enriches their social role, but also fully understands the social responsibility of the role in this simulation experience, and fully understands the difficulties and problems of other roles in role exchange. Different from the long working life, the role played at this time is no longer utilitarian, nor the privilege of leadership. Therefore, the elderly can peacefully accept the loss of his authority and the transformation of his identity, realize and acquire new social roles, and get a smooth transition to new stage of life.

Finally, the elderly' education can help the elderly achieve identity. Identity is the psychological process of the individual's confirmation of self-identity and the understanding of the group and the accompanying emotional experience and behavior patterns. Social learning theory tells that identity is a special kind of imitation. It means that individuals do not need special training and directly rewards, they regard people who are closely related to themselves as imitators, and at the same time imitate and copy each other's complete behavior patterns. Individuals can complete the role identity process through socially provided examples of observation and learning (such as parents, teachers, and other peer groups) or direct guidance (such as reinforcement and punishment). Through the formulation of requirements and regulations, the elderly's education conducts subtle norms and guidance for the elderly groups in teaching and community activities; Screened peer groups with similar backgrounds, value systems, and hobbies provide cross-references for elderly learners; Teamwork and group life can exercise the self-discipline of the elderly.

A comprehensive humanities education curriculum like the Rikkyo Second Stage University allows students to select topics from the perspective of the elderly themselves in the process of writing their graduation thesis, and to think about the new problems and challenges they faced. Their ideas and achievements will provide important reference and inspiration for future academic research and policy planning. A professional skills development course like the Tokyo Agricultural University is a model of "learning to use". Applying the school's own professional advantages, gathering like-minded and free-time old-age groups, providing a platform for the elderly, and extending the value of the school directly to the society, is a valuable experience worth learning in many professional schools. A short-term course similar to Keio University's interest lectures is also a model currently being implemented in many senior universities.

Although it can't achieve the deep expansion of interpersonal relationship and social role in small group activities like the former two types of schools, it expands the activity space for the elderly group who are in a leisurely situation after retirement. Moreover, the low tuition fees make these schools the most acceptable platform for the elderly's education.

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