Baltic Sea Region
Association
for Research
in Adult Education

LEARNING IN THE YOUNG ADULT YEARS - COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVES

LARISSA JÕGI

The transition to adulthood is a demanding and crucial time with complicated learning processes for young adults, especially those with different learning disabilities and needs. Learning encompasses all human behaviour and all human endeavours (Pritchard 2008, p.6). Cognitive-structuralist tradition and the social-constructivist approach to learning give us a basis for understanding why it is important to research adult learners' abilities and learn how to adapt the teaching process according to their existing skills and experience (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2012; Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

This issue of *Journal Studies for the Learning Society* brings together papers from Finland, Japan and Estonia to illustrate and explore notions of lifelong learning by presenting research results from different educational and cultural contexts. Researchers discuss and explain the influences of learning possibilities and different forms of training for young adults by focusing on two main questions: how do young adults learn in formal educational context; and what are the influences on their learning? Empirical results point to a few major influences on the different aspects of cognitive learning, reading and argumentation skills of young adults from different educational institutions.

In the first paper, *Secondary education students with reading disabilities - findings from two remedial training experiments*, Petri Vanninen and Kaarina Määttä focus on the remedial training prospects for adults with dyslexia. The main purpose of the research was to provide new information about reading disabilities and to determine the usefulness of remedial training for dyslexia in Finland. The research results showed positive developments in students' reading

during the remedial training period. Dyslexia can have determining effects on a young person's learning identity, educational choices, and life in general.

The second paper in this issue, *Literacy of young adults learning at gymnasiums: literacy or illiteracy?*, reports the results from Ene Varik's doctoral dissertation which focuses on the analysis of literacy in young people learning at upper secondary schools. The study revealed that the majority of young people who had reading difficulties at school also experienced reading difficulties as adults. Ene Varik highlights how young adults who were learning at gymnasiums assessed their coping with literacy-related activities and their skills in reading texts with different degrees of difficulty?

In the third paper, *The effect of debate training on argumentation skills: the developmental process for Japanese college students*, Nakano Mika and Maruno Shun'ichi focus on the cognitive competence of young adults. Their study aims at exploring how members of a community acquire argumentation skills through debating. The results of the study contribute to an exploration of how cognitive competence develops in individuals using social scaffolding in a community of practice.

The final part of this issue is a book overview by Eve-Liis Roosmaa, Triin Roosalu and Ellu Saar, which introduces and summarizes the large international research project, *LLL 2010 - Towards a lifelong learning society in Europe: the contribution of the education system (2005-2011)*. This project has focused on the contribution of education systems to the process of making lifelong learning a reality and their role as a potential agency of social integration in 13 European countries. The book, *Lifelong Learning in Europe: Na-*

LARISSA JÕGI, Tallinn University

DE GRUYTER
OPEN

DOI 10.2478/sls-2013-0006

tional Patterns and Challenges, (edited by Ellu Saar (Tallinn University, Estonia), Odd Bjørn Ure (Fafo, Norway), and John Holford (University of Nottingham, UK) is based on the results of this research project and contains innovative empirical studies with regard to macro, micro and mezzo levels (Saar, Bjørn Ure & Holford, 2013, p.6).

In this issue, the contributing authors used different methodology and methods for gathering theoretical and empirical data. One conclusion may be drawn from all the papers: there are many different ways for researching adult learning which are teaching us how to understand, support and facilitate adults as learners.

REFERENCES

Knowles, M., Holtoon, E., & Swanson, R. (2012). *The Adult Learner*. Oxford: Elsevier Inc.

Pritchard, A. (2008). *Studying and Learning at University*. Los-Angeles-London-New-Delphi-Singapore: SAGE.

Saar, E., Bjørn Ure, O., & Holford, J. (Eds.) (2013). *Lifelong Learning in Europe: National Patterns and Challenges*. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Tennant, M. & Pogson, P. (1995). *Learning and Change in the Adult Years*. San Francisco: Yossey-Bass.