

Gelpi and Lifelong Education / Learning

Takamichi Uesugi

The news of Dr. E. Gelpi's death was a terrible shock to me. He was expected to come to Japan in February, 2002 invited by Kameoka City whose committee for Ishida Baigan Prize which I joined decided to give him the first prize. I had recommended him as the most appropriate person who should be received it. It is given persons who contribute to lifelong learning, connected with Baigan, born in Kameoka, an adult educator as the founder of Sekimon Shingaku, a school of philosophy which spread among citizens, especially merchants in 18th century. Dr. R. N. Bellah described that the value diffused by this school was one of factors which underpinned modernization in Japan like Protestant ethic in Western countries. (R. N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-industrial Japan*.) Gelpi proposed and spread a valuable view of lifelong education as a director and consultant in Unesco.

Though the concept of lifelong learning is used more than lifelong education because the former has broader meanings, stressing importance of learners' initiative today, we should avoid some confusion and inquire the relationship between the concepts of learning and education.

Gelpi gave us many important ideas of lifelong education and learning. I remember a meeting for discussing lifelong education with him in Osaka in 1987. Being asked what he thought of Declaration on the Right to Learn proposed at the fourth International Conference of Adult Education held by Unesco, he replied that it was not sufficient without referring to education because the right to learn might not be guaranteed unless suitable education was established. At that time he insisted that not only education for all but education by all was important. When I heard an officer of Ministry of Education explained that learners' initiative was to select a suitable course for him or her provided by public bodies, I thought that his idea was far from Gelpi's. Right to learn is maintained by right to education which enhances people to manage educational activities. Thus citizens' public halls have tried to help residents set up voluntary study circles through participating in the management of courses. All men and women can teach what they gained from their own experience, e.g., work and folk culture.

Education does not mean only teaching but providing materials, planning programs and organizing people for learning. Everybody is to be an educator as well as a learner. The concept of social education used in Japan is different from European and has broad meanings including non-formal education and informal education, connecting with learning by doing except school education. It has contributed to making many citizens participate in educational activities and become educators through mutual education or cooperative learning

though it tends to avoid continuous learning through long courses which offer systematic knowledge. Community education in social education has been promoted so that residents may solve social problems and improve living conditions in cooperation with each other.

The concept of self-directed learning used by Gelpi is not necessarily the same as many American adult educators regard as learning without teacher. It means control of the ends, contents, and means of education by individuals and groups against the repressive forces. It is similar to the concept of self-education used by Japanese adult educators who want to keep freedom of education from governmental control. Gelpi often used the word "struggle" because he found conflicts in the contemporary society, and promoted learning for consciousness-raising. He insisted to see education in relation to production system and urged workers' education and training for decreasing the division of labour which oppressed people.

As Japan was seen as an economy-oriented country by him, his advice to us was to make much of culture. He thought that Japanese people did not enjoy cultural activities sufficiently because of long-hour work. Today monetarism influences the world and weakens learning to be which fosters critical views of social and political events. It is necessary for us to become aware of that developed countries including Japan have exploited developing countries.

It is said that "anytime", "anywhere", and "anyone" are attached importance to in lifelong learning. In order to actualize it, it must be asked whom and what lifelong learning should be for. The answer may be that it should be for the oppressed and for liberation from the oppression. We can develop our culture through learning different cultures maintained by minority groups, which must be given important position within the country learnt from Gelpi's idea.

While Gelpi's approach to lifelong learning was radical, his attitude was broad-minded. Attending a conference which I thought sustained a different approach from his, he told me that it was important to gain a new idea from it. He talked over education with me eagerly in Osaka, Kyoto and Paris and asked me why I thought so even if I agreed with his opinion. I miss him.