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**Learning Organisations for Older People: comparing models, of learning in the University of Third Age (U3A) in the UK and the Senior University (SU) in Korea**

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**Keywords:** UK; Korea; U3A; Senior University; Older adults; lifelong learning; comparative education; third age.

**Abstract:**

Despite the low priority given to the general education of older people in public policy, various learning programmes for older people have been developed in many countries in the non-statutory sector, focusing on non-credit learning and the academic development of older people. One of the largest non-credit learning institutions for older people in the UK is the University of the Third Age (U3A), which was established in 1981 to provide general education services for older people. Its counterpart in South Korea is the Senior University (SU), which was created by the Korean Older People's Association (KOPA) in 1981. U3A and SU's cultures of learning are compared: the mutual aid or self-help model and organization-led welfare model; the informal learning orientation and formal learning orientation; the andragogical and pedagogical models; the buffet or cafeteria style and set-menu style; horizontal and vertical teacher-student relationships; bottom-up and top-down management styles. Contextualised analysis of all these differences shows how U3A has grown from the tradition of liberalism and self-help tradition in the UK and SU is based on the tradition of collectivism and Confucianism in South Korea. The members of the U3A have a middle-class background and culture, and so dominantly feel more comfortable with an academic, discourse-based form of learning, while the SU members had a 'Botongsaram (ordinary man) culture' in which they preferred practical activities and pastimes (such as music and dancing) to academic subjects. The paper discusses ways in which cultures of learning can be understood from the perspective of the third age group, so as to develop different learning models to satisfy the diverse interests of older adults in third age learning.

## Introduction

The widespread concern for lifelong education during the past 50 years has certainly led to a broadening of learning opportunities for older people. Alongside the concept of lifelong education, the practical impacts of learning for older people have been recognised in studies of the wider benefits of learning ( Schuller et al 2001) and in the ways in which adults negotiate transitions in the life course ( Evans, Schoon and Weale, 2013). Learning can ease the onset of ageing for an individual and can actually improve health and well-being. Learning further enables the performance of other important roles, such as serving as community volunteers, grandparents, and carers. People participating in learning in later life have a more active social life as they are more immersed in the affairs of their own community (Dench and Regan, 2000).

Despite politicians often showing indifference to the general education of older people, various learning programmes for older people have been developed in many countries in the non-statutory sector, focusing on non-credit learning and the personal development of older people. One of the largest non-credit learning institutions for older people in the UK is the University of the Third Age (U3A), which was established in 1981 to provide general education services for older people. Its counterpart in South Korea is the Senior University (SU), which was created by the Korean Older People's Association (KOPA) in 1981. Currently, there are 826 U3A local groups with 273,141 total members in 2011 (U3A webpage <http://www.u3a.org.uk>). U3A has 33 regional or area networks and 40 subject networks. In Korea, 321 groups nationwide comprised the SU in 2011 and there are 13 Senior Leader University (KOPA webpage <http://www.koreapeople.co.kr/>).

In a globalising world, the comparative study method is regaining its importance. The importance of understanding teaching and learning in other countries is increasingly recognised in the search for better policy making and for the improvement of learning and teaching activities, practices and systems. The research aims for this study were to examine the characteristics of the third age non-credit education from multi-dimensional perspectives and to explore the cultural meanings behind the differences in older people's learning between the UK and Korea.

## **Ageing society and emergence of the third age**

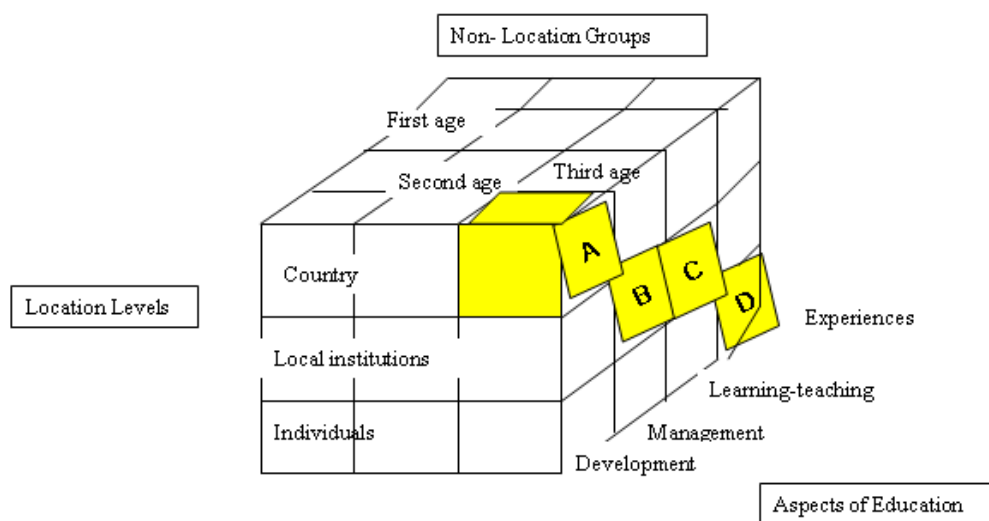
There are conceptual changes that mark the life of retirement and its transitions. Peter Laslett, in the book "*A Fresh Map of Life*" (1996), describes the recent demographic and sociological changes in terms of the emergence of a new 'Third Age'. Laslett notes that, until the twentieth century, the majority of adults lived their lives in a 'second age' by working and caring for their family, before they eventually reached a usually short period of dependency, decrepitude, and death. Through the twentieth century major changes occurred as states introduced mandatory retirement, the provision of state-funded pensions, and increased life expectancy resulting from better (often state-funded) health care. People from industrialised countries began to experience a 'third age': a healthy, active and satisfied life and a period of personal fulfillment, that follows the second age of life (independence, maturity and responsibility), and precedes the last stage of dependence, decrepitude and death.

The growing attention to lifelong education among the older population is due in major part to the demographic trends affecting the developed world, and much of the developing world, during the last century. According to the standard definition of the United Nations, societies where the proportion of the population aged 65 and over is greater than 7 per cent, 14 per cent, or 20 per cent are called 'ageing societies', 'aged societies', or 'super-aged societies', respectively. Korea entered the stage of being an ageing society in 1999. In less than twenty years (before 2020), Korea is expected to become an aged society, (KNSO, 2005). The UK became an ageing society in 1929 and an aged society in 1976 (earlier than Korea by forty-two years), and it is projected to become a super-aged society by 2021. Whilst a few decades ago Korea had the youngest population among the OECD countries, the country is undergoing a rapid ageing process, as a result of its rapid pace of economic development. Korea is likely to experience one of the most rapid demographic transitions from an ageing to an aged society. This phenomenon, which Jaegwan Byun (2004) has called 'intensive ageing', does not provide enough time for a society to prepare for the demographic and social changes that will occur. Effective government and community-based action is likely to be a critical factor for dealing with the phenomenon. This research explores the scope for third age 'universities' to contribute to the support of older adults in these emergent scenarios.



## Methodology

A multi-faceted analysis has been adopted (Figure 1) according to the cube model of Bray and Thomas (1995). In this study, four cubes are investigated. Cube A is the integration of third age, country, and the development of each institution; Cube B is the integration of third age, local institutions and management; Cube C is the integration of third age, local institutions, and the teaching and learning orientation; Cube D is the integration of third age, individuals and their learning experiences. For the data collection, two questionnaires were developed: one for institutions and another for institution members. The institutional questionnaire was based on the taxonomy of Manheimer (1995), and the member questionnaire drew upon the theory of Cross (1981). Along with the questionnaire survey, document analysis and interviews complemented the data.



**Figure 1 Multi-faceted Model for the Study**  
(Adapted from Bray and Thomas, 1995)

## **Current state of U3A in UK and SU in Korea**

### U3A in the UK

U3A is a self-help organization, first established in 1981, that offers learning opportunities for older people in the UK. Its roots can be traced back to France in 1973, where a strong relationship existed between traditional universities and retired people. Although it diversified from an original emphasis on study of the humanities and the arts, the 'French model' still retains its close ties with universities. The 'British model' is based on an ethos of self help and does not depend on universities for its identity (Findsen, 2005; Percy and Frank, 2011).

The U3A in the UK follows a constitution first set out by Peter Laslett in 1981, where rules are kept to a minimum. As a matter of principle, U3A has only members and does not differentiate teachers from students (Laslett, 1996). The teachers are those members who have knowledge they wish to impart to others; members pay a tuition fee which is very low to encourage the maximum involvement of older people. Furthermore, learning sessions are conducted in a member's house or a local community hall. There are no specified entry qualifications, even though U3A uses the title 'university'. The word university is used in its original sense, to refer to a group of individuals committed to a particular activity, which is not necessarily intellectual (Laslett, 1996).

Every year, a general meeting and conference is organised, where the main office-bearers and committee members are elected and major issues are tackled. In addition, summer school programmes offering a variety of subjects are held annually. The schools, staffed by volunteer tutors, are open to all members. U3A makes good use of the Internet. Aside from the central U3A website ([www.U3A.org.uk](http://www.U3A.org.uk)), many local U3As have also set up their own sites to share information about their activities.

### SU in Korea

KOPA, a private enterprise created through the Civil Law article No. 32, is a national centre that organizes various activities for senior citizens. It has three founding objectives: to increase seniors' status in society; to uphold seniors' welfare; and promote social relationships among senior people (Choi, D., 2002). KOPA fulfils these objectives by carrying out the following activities: creating a job centre and

promoting the enhancement of senior job-related competency; the provision of senior leisure facilities; education for meaningful ageing life; research and policy development for senior welfare; the preservation of traditional culture and guidance of adolescents by teaching filial piety; and other activities related to advancing senior people's interests (Kim, D., 2004, p. 30).

KOPA has its headquarters in Seoul, with 16 associations in various cities and provinces. There are also 245 borough-level centres and 60,397 senior community halls ('Kyungrodang'), which are situated in villages and urban apartment complexes. In addition, there are 3,823 senior classes (senior groups) in every elementary school district. Some of the borough-level centres have general welfare centres and senior welfare centres, and some programmes have been named senior universities in those centres. In each regional centre, the President takes responsibility while the Dean is tasked to control the administration of the curriculum, the contents of which are lectures related to aspects of senior life, health, music or dance. Normally, senior classes are staffed by volunteers and the borough-level staff for KOPA centres usually work for senior universities.

### **Exploring commonalities, differences and cultural meanings**

Three main differences were drawn out: U3A is set up specifically for learning but SU is a sub-division of KOPA which is an organisation for the development of the rights of older people; U3A seeks to be an independent and self-help organisation but SU would like to obtain more support from the government; and regarding the development of local branches of U3A, this was achieved through local people who agreed to the philosophy of the U3A movement whereas KOPA expanded to a large extent in the late 1970s through a merging of SUs setup by other people or other organisations and by establishing its own SUs.

From the perspective of historical development, the two institutions have a common basis in that they started because of the lack of governmental policies for learning of older people. However, regarding the relationship between the government and each institution there is a big contrast between the two institutions. The British model of U3A has, from the beginning, been independent from the government. It started as a social movement for the learning of older people and adopted a 'self-help model'. The SU rather can be described as a 'politically connected model'. Even though the running body is a non-governmental organization, the word 'politically connected' implies funding and support from the governmental as the national welfare system

grows. In Korea, it has been the welfare movement which increased learning opportunities for older people.

The start of U3A was based on the decrease of national welfare from the late 1970s. The UK is famous as one of the western countries which established a national welfare system very early - following the Beveridge Report in 1942, and implemented in the late 1940s. However, with the economic crisis in the 1970s, in 1979 the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher started changing its policy on the welfare system within a framework of neo-liberalism and so from the 1980s onwards self-help movements flourished. U3A developed to replace the government's decreased educational provision for older people.

In the case of South Korea, still in the 1960s, after Japan's colonisation and the Korean War, the economic development was the first goal in the whole society and welfare for the older people was outside governmental attention. KOPA was formed as part of a social movement for elderly welfare in Korea. Since then, KOPA has tried to gain more support from the government and SU started as one of the business branches of KOPA from 1981. The existences of social organizations such as KOPA which have to depend on the state were attributed to the strict control of the government on the operation of educational organisations. At the height of the military power in Korea, in the 1970s and 1980s, the government forbade the promotion of social and liberal organisation providing informal and non-formal learning. To enlarge its scope of business KOPA was required to use political networks.

The self-help nature of U3A and the politically-connected characteristics of SU are understood also by the relationship between local branches and the head-quarters of each institution: the U3A is 'horizontal' and the SU is 'vertical'. The headquarters of the U3A, the Third Age Trust, does not exercise any control over local groups and encourages local branches to share their experiences and resources. The Third Age Trust does run a resource centre and issues a magazine. A local representative committee manages each U3A group democratically. Each SU has a running committee, however it is controlled by a KOPA committee and the local KOPA is controlled by the central KOPA committee. SUs of KOPA conform to KOPA regulations; they are financially supported by KOPA and operate in a KOPA building.

As for the relationship between the institutions and their participants, U3A's style can



be described as 'bottom-up' and SU's as 'top-down'. In the bottom-up style, groups of interested older learners define their learning protocol and appoint one or more of themselves to lead their studies. The top-down style is defined as an educational programme for older people designed by institution staff, with courses, lectures and workshops taught by regular or adjunct teachers.

The U3A style of bottom-up management is illuminated by the origins of liberalism which are dialectical and democratic (Fieldhouse, 1985). In essence, U3A is a self-help organisation. Educational programmes are run by the elderly themselves who participate actively in the design and planning of the activities. U3A shows an obvious departure from the school education tradition. Each U3A is a coalition of members who make all the decisions (Formosa, 2010). Most of the U3As are initiated by older people in their locality. They are self-sufficient and self-directed. The U3A has succeeded in growing its third-age clientele because it has reduced many barriers which previously hindered older learners from participating in later life education (Midwinter, 2005). According to its proponents, there are neither awards nor exams nor entry requirements to overshadow the excitement and vigour of sharing of ideas among the participants. This common sense basis of older people learning, regardless of members' educational backgrounds, has gained a worldwide acceptance according to Swindell and Thompson (1995).

Regarding subjects and activities, a metaphor for the UK model is 'buffet or cafeteria style' whereas the Korean model could be called 'set-menu'. In a buffet or cafeteria customers can choose what they want to eat and pay only for what they eat, and because there is no set menu, customers select a mixture of things they like. By contrast, with a set-menu customers cannot choose their own combination of foods and the set-menu price has to be paid even though customers might not want some of the food provided. U3A is subject-based, which means that members choose the classes they want to join, whereas SU is course-based in which learners enroll in a particular course which consists of several subjects and once you enter the course, you have to follow the curriculum of that course without selection. Therefore, the range of subjects available through U3A is relatively large, from humanities subjects such as philosophy, psychology, literature and so on to hobbies or craft-based activities according to an individual's interest. In the case of SU, subjects of the course generally can be summarised into dance, singing, exercise and lectures. The lectures focus mainly on 'health matters'. In each institution the reasons given for joining and the benefits from learning were broadly similar between the two

countries, but the major reason found for joining U3A is that people like learning whereas for the SU it is to maintain a healthy life.

As for the relationship between teacher and students, this study examined the interchangeability of the role of teacher-student. If the role is interchangeable, the concept of teacher-student will be more similar to tutor-participant. Jarvis (1985) puts this in another way, for instance, in a pedagogical approach the learner is dependent whereas in an andragogical approach the learner moves towards independence. In andragogy, students are self-directing, and teachers encourage and nurture this movement whereas in pedagogy, the teacher directs what, when and how a subject is learned. Therefore, in this study, a fixed curriculum with a fixed role of teacher–student was defined as a pedagogical model whereas a selective curriculum with changeable role of teacher–student was defined as an andragogical model.

The SU operates as an adult learning extension of schooling. It is patterned after the conventional education system in terms of curriculum design, class format and management. There is a tendency that each SU will follow a formal learning system managed by the head quarter of the institution, thus relying upon the pedagogical learning model. Two reasons were identified as to why the pattern of conventional learning is preferred. First, Korea attaches more importance to formal education as a powerful means for social and economic development. Second, being tied to Confucianism there is an attachment to the formal, structured relationship between teacher and student; and having a nationally determined school curriculum is a dominant idea. Confucianism has greatly influenced the educational system of Korea. Confucianism is deeply concerned with the integration of all human life aspects, especially when it comes to education, civil administration and ceremonies. Confucianism is a part of the Korean society and is still manifested in the values held even by the new generation of Koreans. Thus, Confucianism and the traditional lifelong educational system in Korea are inseparable (Merriam, 2007).

Based on the members' responses regarding reasons for participation, benefits, preferred subjects and learning methods, and attitudes towards learning and ageing as well as socio-demographic backgrounds, it has been shown that U3A is characterised by a more 'academic' model of learning than for SU, based on self-directed pursuit of academic subjects and discussion. These models can be explained as arising from cultural differences. U3A is a reflection of middle class culture and SU in Korea is explained with 'ordinary person' (Botongsaram) culture.

Even though SUs in Korea follow the pedagogical model and attempt to shape learning in a formal education style, paradoxically its members are 'ordinary people' who seek non-academic and hobby-centred subjects like dancing and singing in the name of learning and education. As there is a fixed role as a student, they tend to be dependent on teachers for what they learn rather than to be actively involved in the learning process. Considering their educational and occupational backgrounds, the dependent characteristics of the members in SU are easily understood. Most of the members of SU are female who did not have other jobs except 'being a housewife' in their lives. The outer format of SU has a formal educational institution style but the inner content consists of ordinary people who often do not have enough educational confidence for dealing with academic subjects, or for participating in discussions or sharing their knowledge or skills as is typical for students of U3A. I identified U3A with middle-class culture because member's educational, occupational and financial statuses are higher than that of SU members. First of all, in terms of socio-demographic status, the U3A membership ranges from average to very high whereas the SU membership ranges from very low to average. Even though this is not the case for all members, some members of U3A are well-resourced enough to invite (5 to 15) people to their house as places for learning.

Secondly, most members of U3A come from professional backgrounds, although (like SU) most members are female. The educational level of the U3A membership ranges from average to very high while SU ranges from low to average. In most instances within the U3A, group leaders are retired academics, teachers or professionals. In Korea, retired academics or teachers tend to be speakers rather than members. In SU there is the concept of teacher and students, not members, and therefore retired professionals would want to be a teacher in SU rather than a student. In contrast, U3A members could share their knowledge and skills as tutors or group leaders at one point while at another point playing the role of student in other classes.

While self-help learning is also related to individualism in the western culture, learning in Korea is related to collectivism. In western culture, individual choice and sharing is encouraged while in Korea, following and obedience to authority is encouraged. Individualism means a society in which ties between individuals are

loose. On the other hand, collectivism stands for a society in which people are integrated into groups and they are expected to follow groups' values and expectations. Cultures can therefore be broadly characterized as collectivist and individualist. Individualist cultures emphasize personal achievement while collectivist cultures emphasize group goals. China, Korea, and Japan are recognized as collectivist cultures while United States and Western Europe have individualist cultures.

Generally speaking, people in individualist cultures are prone to loneliness and people in collectivist cultures can have a fear of rejection (Sawir, et al., 2007). In the UK, self-help movements like U3A provide a welcomed chance in which people meet like-minded people, and make friends while reducing the prospect of loneliness in the long run. Regarding the benefits of participation, in the UK, members mentioned friendship (meeting people) most frequently. Considering that in the UK, the percentage of people living alone is greater than those who are accompanied, the social function of U3A is clearly important.

Culturally, Korean people like to gather together to spend time. In the case of older people, there is a place called 'Kyungro-dang' in villages where older people spend time simply doing things together. Many older people spend time here and have lunch together. It is open to all elderly people without any restrictions.

In the UK, libraries are public places which older people use to get information. Libraries in the UK are used by every group of people as well as older people and have deep historical roots (Smith, 1997). On the contrary, in Korea libraries are not frequented by older people. Therefore, the members of U3A reported getting information about U3A from the libraries but members of SU did not mention libraries as a place to get information.

Regarding the reasons to join institutions, there were differences in the responses for U3A and SU. The responses showed U3A members as learning oriented and SU learners as more instrumentally motivated. In the UK, the most frequent response was 'because I like learning' and 'because it seems interesting' while in Korea it was 'to keep healthy'. SU respondents' focus on health benefit as a reason to join was

also supported by the responses to the question related to the benefits of joining the institution: more than 50 per cent of respondents (54/110) mentioned 'health' as the most important benefit. It is a national-cultural trend in Korea to encourage healthy living and well-being. And it is apparent from the data that older people regard learning as an instrumental method to make them do something for their health.

Regarding the gender imbalance, feminisation is a visible phenomenon in both organisations. However, there is a difference between the two. In the UK, not only the membership comprises mostly women, the management committee is also predominantly female; while in Korea, executive members tend to be male and most of the members are female.

Based on the observation of members' profiles in the two countries, we recognised that older adults are not homogenous. Glendenning and Battersby (1990, p. 223-5) state that there is a need to argue against the tendency to consider the elderly as one homogeneous group as if social class, gender, and ethnicity differences can be easily erased by participation in education. Table 1 summarises the comparison of the learning characteristics of U3A and SU discussed so far.

**Table 1 Summary of Comparison of Learning Characteristics of Two Institutions**

		<b>U3A –UK</b>	<b>SU-KOREA</b>
Historical Development	Model	Mutual-aid or Self-help model	Organisation-led welfare model (Politically-connected model)
	Culture	Economic liberalism	Military government
Institutional Characteristics	Model	Andragogical model (Informal-education model)	Pedagogical model (Formal-education model)
		- Bottom-up management (Democratic)	- Top-down management (Hierarchical)
		- Flexible role of teacher-student (Horizontal)	- Fixed role of teacher-student (Vertical)

		- Buffet or cafeteria style of subject selection (Subject-based)	- Course meal or set-menu style of subject selection (Course-based)
	Culture	Liberal adult education	Confucianism
Participants Experiences	Model	Academic model	Non-academic model
		- Discussion preferred (Actively participating)	-Lecture preferred (Passively listening)
		-Academic subjects provided (Philosophy, psychology, history etc.)	-More leisure activity focused (Dancing and singing)
		-Higher economic and educational level of participants	-Lower economic and educational level of participants
	Culture	Middle-class culture	Ordinary person culture

### Future scenarios for third age education

The self-help learning model (andragogical model) of British U3A is converging with others around the world and this is to be welcomed in the ageing society.

Considering that the emergence of third agers, and the increasing discussion of the andragogical learning model, was active in the UK earlier than Korea by several decades, the conditions have been created for this self-help model to be increasingly welcomed in the future in Korea. However, as found in this study, the cultural, socio-economic and political differences of Korea will be influential and reflected in the process of adoption to some extent, which is patterned on a process of 'crossvergence', combining elements of both convergence and divergence.

It has been observed, in conducting this study, that the UK U3As are trying to expand virtual learning programmes through the use of the internet. This is a reflection of a changing society and recognising the changes in participants' learning needs as well. We suggest that once a self-help model of learning of older people like U3A can be established in Korea, then Korea also will move into developing on-

line learning programmes for older people in their learning organisations. This can be understood as a phenomenon of global convergence of learning models but it is most likely that it will be adapted into the Korean cultural context (that is, a process of divergence), as observed in this study. A critical issue for the self-help model in both countries is to increase the participation of less advantaged people in programmes such as U3A. The self-help approach tends to attract the more educated, and the development of online learning is also likely to exclude the least advantaged. In Korea, this is likely to be an area of convergence. Unlike in UK society, the Korean government still strengthens the welfare framework for older people and this potentially means that the least advantaged will be actively supported by the state to participate in learning, which would be a divergence from the UK situation. It is probable that the Korean government should focus most on the least advantaged people, with the welfare-state model, alongside promotion of self-help for those who are able to organise with less support and less intervention from the government.

### **Suggestions for development of the learning of older people in Korea.**

One of the main objectives of this cross-cultural study was to suggest how to develop learning of older people in Korea, based on an understanding of the contextual and cultural differences involved. As noted previously, Korea has the youngest population among the OECD countries, but it is expected to undergo a rapid ageing process over the next few decades due to its economic development. Korea is likely to experience one of the most rapid demographic transitions from an ageing to an aged society. The process of ageing is so rapid there is not enough time for a society to prepare for the changes resulting from ageing. This gap between the speed of ageing and the preparation for that ageing society was named 'culture lag' by Ogburn, as long ago as 1922.

In preparation for the aged-society in Korea, educational programmes for older people should be designed in ways that consider the specific social changes that affect older people in Korea. In traditional Korean society, older people hold a symbolic position and authority based on the ethic of filial piety, rooted in the Confucian tradition. Aged persons secured respect, and children had strong

responsibilities to support their parents in later life. However, industrialisation and urbanisation brought forth nuclear families, emphasising the values of independence. With the growing number of older people who live by themselves without children's support or co-living with families, the elderly need alternative venues to socialize with friends. Based on the research results, I suggest several points for the development of learning of older people in Korea. .

First, there should be a move towards a social climate in which older people are able to help themselves to achieve learning and education. As shown in the case of the U3A, older people have a great potential to share their knowledge and organise learning programmes themselves. As the number of educated people in the elderly group increases<sup>i</sup>, self-help learning becomes possible in Korea. Even though Korea is at the stage of establishing a welfare society, and considering the steep increase in the ageing population, there should be an atmosphere that older people can take their own steps to prepare for their later life. At the same time, the government should focus attention and resources more on the groups of older people who have difficulties in participating in learning activities or in organising learning activities themselves for various reasons: financial, physical or mental. Recently, campaigns for the self-help movement of older people have focused in the field of elderly welfare. For example, in the newspaper, *Noinsidae* (老人時代, Older People's Age), in May 2011, the emergence of the self-help clubs of older people was reported as follows:

*Senior clubs which used to be dependent on welfare centres are changing into being 'creative' and 'independent' now. These positive changes dispel the image of dependent older people. The subjects of clubs are various: Sports dance, dance, drumming, etc. The people in those clubs communicate and participate in society through doing performance as well as learning. ... One senior club has the motto like "Let's learn! Let's enjoy! And let's share!" (11 May, 2011, from Noinsidae newspaper).*

The SU in Korea is based on a 'welfare model' and most facilities for elderly education in Korea have relied on governmental support. In order to establish a self-help movement for the learning of older people, first of all there should be a consulting and support agency for older people. The National Centre for Lifelong

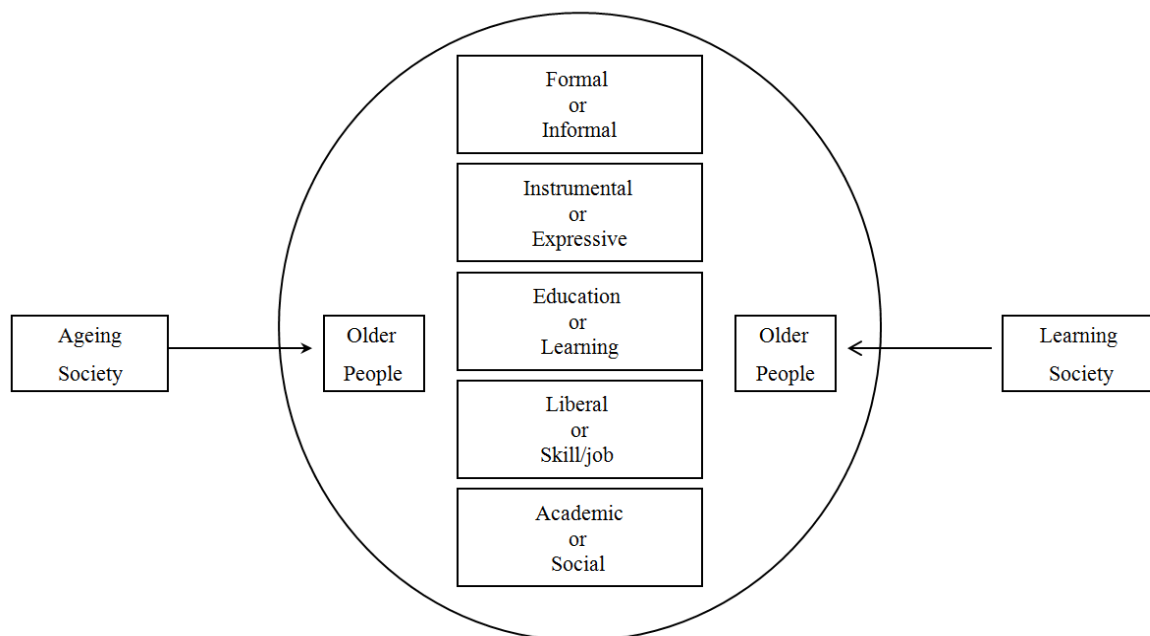


Education was established in 2003 according to the Lifelong Education Law and this was changed to 'the National Institute for Lifelong Education' in 2008. Even though this institute has focused up to now on lifelong education at the level of higher education, such as 'credit bank' and 'self-study bachelor degree programme', the institute could take a consulting role to promote a climate of learning among older people. One more specific strategy to develop a self-help climate in learning is to make it easier for older people to access public libraries for their information sharing and searching for learning opportunities in a locality. Since the initiation of the Lifelong Education Law, public libraries have been designated as facilities of lifelong learning and have been providing learning programmes for audiences including older people. In 2010, Jaecheon city established the Elderly Library, dedicated to use by older people.

As a pre-cursor to establishing a self-help climate in learning, there has to be a change in perspectives on the learning of older people. In Korean (as well as UK) society, we tend to categorise older people as a group with special needs, like prisoners. In terms of giving special attention to minority groups this categorisation can be understood to be based on concerns for welfare. However, it is important to understand that expanding learning opportunities for older people is not because older people have been marginalised and compensation for them should be offered, but because society requires a new paradigm of learning in general and in this context, learning for older people should be reconceived.

Sunghee Han (2002b) has proposed that the role of the state should be modified from 'delivering' knowledge through the state school system, to supporting and encouraging individuals in learning; to support them from being passive receivers to independent or active learners. Opportunities are magnified when education happens without teaching in a learning society. In a learning society, learners should be given options to learn at their own pace or convenience. Lifelong education should involve new ways of thinking that are different from the existing background of conventional school education. It is not just an extension of the educational patterns from children to adult, but a new system in which educational concepts are re-conceived (Han, S., 2001, p.5). Therefore in the discussion of learning for older people, wider perspectives on learning should be made: formal and informal,

instrumental and expressive, liberal and occupational, academic and social (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2 Taking a Wider Perspective on Learning Provision for Older People in the Two Countries**

Another priority in Korea should be more opportunities for older people who do not have high educational backgrounds, or who cannot pay high fees for learning programmes. Except for the senior classes provided by welfare-related bodies like SU, there are not many different types of learning programmes for older people to participate in. Generally senior classes are open one day per week in each locality.

The most common style of senior classes is run by the SU and also by religious institutions in Korea. There are also some general voluntary organisations providing programmes for older people: YMCA, YWCA, Red Cross, etc. Generally, these institutions do not run long-term programmes for older people, but short-term ones for the purposes of entertainment. In Korea, there is peculiar phenomenon of Hakwons which are private learning institutions for academic courses, arts, language, computing, baking, gardening, and various job-related skills and in principle older people could use them. However, because of high fees, older people typically do not use them for their hobby or leisure time. Some universities and

colleges provide learning programme for older people through their lifelong learning centres. From the late 1990s, universities (in Korea, institutions providing four-year degree courses) and colleges (those offering only two-year courses) set up lifelong education centres and provided learning programmes equivalent to university-level academic subjects, which are liberal education, leisure-based courses, or skill-improvement courses. However older people tend not to participate in these programmes because they are relatively expensive. Interestingly Kyungbuk National University runs an 'Honorary University' for older people, in which participation is free of charge. Subjects are limited according to the academic departments and professors. This is very similar to the French model of U3A. However, people who do not have high educational background or enough confidence to follow academic courses will find it difficult to participate in such courses.

The role and function of the two governmental authorities related to elderly education, MoEST and MoHW, should be made more clear for the development of elderly education. It is a serious problem that there is not a single authority responsible for the learning of older people. Within Senior Welfare law, senior leisure facilities are defined as those that are responsible for providing leisure programmes for older people, such as educational or learning activities, and programmes which satisfy the need to participate in social activities, to keep healthy, and to ensure income for the institution. This is a key reason why the learning of older people is considered as an aspect of welfare programmes, and thus learning programmes for older people are instrumentally-oriented rather than learning-oriented.

When we say that learning programmes for older people should be learning-oriented, we also highlight the importance of empowerment of older people. Sandra Cusack (1999) argues that the purpose of learning programmes for older people should be 'empowerment', which means reframing old notions of 'power over' to 'power to' and 'power with' approaches, and enabling seniors to play a greater role in setting the community-based research agenda, and shaping the policies and programmes that affect them.

Finally, with regard to gender issues among older people, the research has drawn attention to the many SU members are women with lower educational and socio-

demographic backgrounds. The current main users of SUs, aged more than 65, lived their childhood in an economically deprived situation after the Korean War and in particular, the women in those times did not get access to formal education.

Therefore, an educational needs assessment for older women should be conducted and considered while designing programmes, in which the variations due to socio-economic backgrounds also could also be examined. Even though feminisation is the same phenomenon among members in the two organisations, there is a difference observed. In the UK, not only is the membership mostly women, the management committees also comprises a significant number of females, which is not the case in Korea. In Korea, given that the numbers of women who participate in SU are more than men, there is a need to consider women's characteristics and educational needs much more closely.

## **Conclusion**

Third Agers are people who are still active after retirement. The concept of the life course is changing. In the past, older people have tended to be marginalised within society. Today, the learning of older people is very necessary for them to participate in society and to develop themselves as citizens for a variety reasons. Mezirow (1991) insists that learning is a basic right, and Elmore (1999) stresses the moral aspect of learning opportunities for older people in society. The Carnegie Inquiry into the Third Age reported that when we are older (and no longer caring for dependent children), personal development can once again become a central concern (Schuller & Bostyn, 1992). Schuller and Watson (2009) have further argued that lifelong learning strategies have to responding more adequately to two major trends: the ageing society and changing patterns of paid and unpaid activity.

By taking part in meetings and setting up organisations of the third age, participants are declaring their interest in the future for this age group and the recognition of the value of their continuing learning. Groups like U3As and SUs are critical to enable older people to claim learning opportunities for themselves.

This cross-cultural study may help researchers and policy makers to understand the changing learning scenarios for older people and also to understand how these

learning phenomena are shaped by different cultural and economic contexts. An understanding of both is necessary for an ageing society. This is especially important at a time when public policy reviews indicate a growing realisation that access to learning opportunities may also offer wider non-economic benefits (UNESCO, 2010).

This study has also aimed to contribute to the development of various learning programme models according to the differences and cultures of third age learners. Older people's approaches to and interests in learning are wider and more varied than those of the younger generation, because of their life experiences and backgrounds. No single model will address the diverse interests, abilities and access to learning options of all third-age people.

There are major variations among older adults according to gender, social class, ethnicity, and other variables. Considering this heterogeneity, further research on how different groups of older people perceive their own ways of learning could be pursued with an interpretive perspective. We argue that more in-depth studies on the social context of older adults' lives should be pursued in order that we come to understand what meaning learning brings to their lives. If we study the social lives of older adults, what they do in their daily lives, then we will see how learning is derived from the complex issues and concerns they face. This would provide us with a fuller context for their learning.

One of the arguments for increasing educational opportunities for older people is that education could empower people, in particular those who are in lower socio-demographic status, even though a cause-effect relationship between education in later life and an individual ability to function effectively may be difficult to find. Sandra Cusack (2000) suggests that the conventional meaning of 'empowerment' has been 'power over' but it should be reframed as 'power to' and 'power with' and how this might enable older people to shape the policies and programmes that influence them. Research is needed into how this level of participation can be secured in different cultures and contexts.

From the perspective of comparative study in social gerontology, the study has also highlighted the need for further research based on cross-national studies. Sharf &

Wenger (2000) argue that cross-national research tends to be underrepresented in gerontology. For the development of educational gerontology, more research to explore cultural characteristics of the learning of older people would contribute significantly to the development of the field.

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<sup>i</sup> 2013 PIAAC study findings showed the large increase in the educational competency level among young adults and large gap between the literacy level of young adults and older adults in Korea, contrasting this with England where older adults' competency level was shown to be relatively high when compared with younger generation and compared with Korean older people (OECD 2013).