Learners’ existential competence in a learning society: with a focus on homeschoolers’ borderless learning

Deok-Hee Seo
(Chosun University)
Introduction

🌟 What is a learning society like?

🌟 What kind of learning features a learning society?

🌟 What competence is required from learners for such learning?
What is a learning society is like?

- Structural changes of dissolving boundaries of learning terms (time regulation, place allocation, relational structures, and so on)

What kind of learning features a learning society?

- Borderless learning:
  - as a negative concept of negating prior mode of learning in a schooling society
  - as a positive concept of demanding transformation of learners’ existential structure to construct one’s own borders for learning
What competence is required from learners?

- Phenomenological perspective

- ‘Being in the world’ (Heidegger 1979): being as relational between individual and structure/self and the world/mind and body

- ‘Being to the world’ (Merleau-Ponty 1945): being as dynamic process of the self going towards the world through the body (a corporeal mind as a locus in which the self and the world are constructed at the same time)
What competence is required from learners?

existential competence

‘existential’ : the dynamic and relational situation of the self going toward the world through the body

not reduced to affective aspect, an underlying or overarching capability to fully realize one’s being (the self and the world) through transforming one’s body
How to deal with existential competence

• time, space, relationship, and activity

• fundamental dimensions of mediating the self and the world conceptually

• In particular, for a more vivid picture of borderless learning, which needs transformation of learners’ existential structure in each dimension
Why homeschoolers?

- the most typical case of showing ‘borderless learning’

- ‘frontiers’ who get out of the modern schooling system as a ‘total institution’ which has circumscribed inmates’ everyday life experiences (Reimer 1971, Seo 2002, 2006), and fashion their alternative way of being.
Purpose of this study

- by understanding fundamental structures of homeschoolers’ lived experiences
- to give a proper picture of ‘borderless learning’ and
- to discuss existential competence of learners in each dimension.
Homeschoolers' existential competence

Time: “Do I have to get up early?”

Space: “Where can I learn?”

Starting point to reflect on their way of being inscribed into their body by the modern schooling system

Activity: “What do I want to learn?”

Relationship: “With whom or from whom can I learn?”
Time: being in leisure

- entirely forgetful of flow of time, ‘being in flow without being obsessed with time limit: accomplishing learning task, fully enjoying its consummation

- fully conscious of flow of time, ‘doing nothing in company with reflexivity’: understanding their relation with others and the world as ‘belonging together’

- capitalistic flow of time demands learners outdoing others more quickly at the cost of ‘being in leisure’.
Space: being a nomad

- making every space “out of wall” and “with an educational meaning” regardless of its cultural and institutional functions

- not only rearranging such things as tables, desks, and chairs within the given space, but also transforming the schema of body open to growth and change

- ‘broken off’ by replacing collective attachment to the public school with individual one to the private house
‘lifting the curtain’, seeing the other’s aspects concealed by the stereotyped perspective of schooling

recognizing one’s ability to entirely grasp and control the infinite world of the other’s growth (Levinas 1947)

obsessed with the instrumental relationship and confined within their parents’ limitations, they can disregard other families’ interest and thoughts
Activity: being spontaneous

- taking the initiative to identify what activity they enjoy most
- establishing their standard of doing things and enjoying ensuing values as well as making their living on their own
- passive program consumers (an extension or an acceleration of schooling, failure in fashioning their own way of being)
Discussions: borderless learning

Exiting school of a clockwork-orange society

Developing existential competence within market-driven society

‘borderless learning’ as a positive concept: ‘inalienated integration’ and ‘existential autonomy’
Discussions: Existential competence

- as an underlying competence for a fully realized being

- integrates three aspects (knowledge, skills, and affect) ex. Relationship dimension

- integrates three domains (managing the self, relating to others, and managing tools) ex. Time dimension
Discussions: Existential competence

A holistic nature

A consideration of contextual influence

A priority of exploring the issue of the self

Existential competence
Suggestions

- practical insight for designing educational programs to develop existential competence

- let learners participate in the role models’ activities and emulate their way of being (Wenger 1998)

- let them experiment to get out of institutional borders and to learn with their initiative
Conclusions

Foundation: Existential competence

Attribute: Borderless learning

Purpose: A fully realized being