The Most Frequent Lenses to See Recent Program Planning for Adult: 1999-2003

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide information regarding which theoretical framework has been frequently involved into healthy debate in the field of program planning for adults during the past decade. Also, which research methodologies have been used during that period needs to be answered for future study. By using the ERIC database, 14 articles and 11 proceeding papers were analyzed. The findings indicated that political negotiation approach has viewed as the most popular research issue. Integrative approach has also been frequently studied in recent years. However, the linear essence of the traditional model continues to play a dominant role for many practitioners. Until today, qualitative methods are mainstreams in this field. Also, in order to link practice and theory, both qualitative and quantitative studies are recently contributing to develop a theoretical framework and provide empirical evidences in various settings.

Introduction

Program planning is a critical part in adult education practice to develop and examine learning outcome. However, the evolution of theoretical models for program planning practice appears to be slower than any other framework in the adult education field though a great number of programs have been developed and implemented. According to Sork (2000), since Tyler's work in 1949, the technical rational model has continued to dominate into the 1990s. Such a traditional model has been a major stream even today.

In recent years, however, new approaches to better understand the practice of program planning have been introduced to representative journals, and the annual proceedings papers of scholarly conferences. Particularly, Willson and Cervero's critique of technical rational model created considerable interest, including a number of case studies published in a 1996 issue of New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education. New approaches stress that the traditional models to emphasize linear aspects of program planning practice have leaded to neglect other significant aspects of practice.

However, little is known about which theoretical frameworks has been frequently involved into healthy debate in the field of program planning for adults during the past decade. Also, which research methodologies have been used during that period needs to be answered for future study in this field. In this regard, it appears vital to analyze the recent trends and issues of program planning for adults through a review of the literature in program planning published during the last decade. This study was guided by the following two research questions; Which approaches of program planning for adults have been frequently discussed for the last decade?; Which research methodology has been frequently used for the last decade?

Methodology

This study is based on a literature review and mainly used ERIC database. The key words used to search were both "adult learning" and "program planning." To analyze the trends and issues of program planning theory in this field for the last thirteen years, the computer search using ERIC was limited into journal articles and the proceedings of scholarly conferences such as AERC and AAACE between 1990 and 2003. Several articles were excluded because they did not appear to be fully relevant to the planning theory for adults. Most articles came from Adult Education Quarterly, International Journal of Lifelong Education, and Adult Learning. A content analysis of 25 sources was completed.

A Review of the Literature: Three Approaches

Models about program planning for adults have often been grouped into two ways: for example, closed and opened system (Caffarella, 1994), rational and political negotiation model (McLean, 2000), and prototypical and alternative model (Cookson, 1998). However, through a content analysis, models of program planning practice can be categorized into three approaches: traditional, political negotiation, and integrative approach.

Traditional approach
The literature related to adult program planning has historically showed the more technical aspects of program planning (Mabry and Wilson, 2001). Tyler's work provides the fundamental structure including four critical components: (1) educational purpose; (2) learning contents; (3) organizing learning contents; and (4) evaluation (Maclean, 1994; Sork, 2000). His work has influenced the adult education field such as Knowles' andragogical model, Houle's and Walker's naturalistic model, and Nadler's and Freire's critical model for more than fifty years.
According to Sork (1990), all traditional planning models are likely to share some common features. First, they consist of a set of steps, stages, elements, decision points, or clusters. Second, there are logical connections between steps. Third, all traditional models include at least four steps such as purpose, content, method, and evaluation. On the other hand, some shortcomings of traditional approach have prevalently discussed for the last decade. Although this traditional view has attempted to develop planning practice by "prescribing a scientifically-based procedural logic of completing certain planning tasks […] as a way of optimally ordering and directing planning activities" (Wilson and Cervero, 1997a, p. 85), traditional approach has failed to address the realities of practice and to provide how planners do in real planning process. Any effort to summarize the complexities of planning tends to oversimplify the process as it occurs in practice. In sum, the literature on traditional approach has paid more attention to describe what should be done –normative approach- rather than to explain how planning is done-descriptive approach.

Political Negotiation Approach
Constructing programs for adult learners is more than following a series of steps or completing tasks in each stage (Hansman and Mott, 2000). Kwon and Cho (2002) indicate that for constructing successful programs, the needs of active participants and stakeholders should be involved into program planning process. Also, power and negotiation among interest group is "central form of action that planners undertake in constructing program" (Cervero & Wilson 1994a, p. 29) In this approach, program planning can define a kind of social activity (Cervero & Wilson 1994a, b) and Wilson and Cervero (1996a; 1996b; 1996c; 1997a; 1997b) have criticized the existing literature in program planning that has focused on the traditional approach, which is called technical rational model. Actually, Cervero and Wilson's perspective starts with the question whether traditional approach could be very helpful for planners to construct programs. They believe that traditional approach has ignored the political realities and negotiation processes of actual planning practice. At the same time, they suggested a new approach, paying more attention to the people work of planning.

In 1996, Wilson and Cervero address the claim that "the importance of the people work of planning (p. 6)" needs to receive more attention in the field of program planning. Planners construct programs in complex organizational situations. Culture, tradition, interests and structure can influence planners' works. This nature cannot be explained by technical principles. Rather, since planners act among the complex relationships of power and interests, they often cannot follow the steps prescribed by traditional approach. More specifically, people work

always includes political aspects such as a variety of interests and power within a group, an organization, and a community. Regardless of planners' intents, they are more likely to be stood in the midst of complex contexts. After all, the ability of negotiating various interests and power relationships is a critical component of constructing programs.

How to negotiate different interests in the complex of power relationships? Wilson and Cervero (1996b) try to solve this question with proposing both the ethical and the political stance. In terms of ethical stance, Wilson and Cervero (1996b) strongly point out that planners should maintain and develop a substantively democratic planning process. Specifically, Wilson and Cervero (1996a) believe that "there are five groups of people whose interests always matter in planning programs: learners, teachers, planners, institutional leaders, and the affected public" (p. 12). In terms of political stance, planners make sense the power and interests in a given planning context. According to planners' understanding about the context, specific political strategies could be decided to negotiate interests and power relationships. In addition, Wilson and Cervero (1996a; 1996b; 1996c; 1997a) emphasize that being responsible ethically and politically is the most fundamental for planners to construct program.

Political negotiation approach has been recognized as a turning point in how program planning is viewed and understood by researchers and practitioners (Hendricks, 2001). In this regard, how planners actually negotiate multiple and often conflicting interests in everyday practice has begun to receive more attention for the past decade (Mabry & Wilson, 2001). Several qualitative and quantitative studies have demonstrated the relevance of power, interests, and negotiation in adult education program planning.

Integrative Approach
Since the importance of power relationships and negotiation advocated by Cervero and Wilson (1994) was introduced in the field of program planning, some studies have integrated this new approach into typical planning models. A few years later, Sork proposes a model updated from his typical six-step model introduced in 1989 and 1990. In view, his updated model seems to result from the reflection of political negotiation approach.

Most planning models under the integrative approach seem to have some common features as the following: first, they consist of multiple steps or elements as well as traditional approach; however they appear to avoid linear relationships among steps or elements. Second, to construct the effective program, they acknowledge that planners' work in complex social contexts need to receive attention as well as what should be done in each step. Third, they suggest that planners select any steps or elements that they find more compatible with their context or style.

Table 1 Approaches / Source Matrix

Sources (year in order)	Research Methodology	Approach		
		Traditional Approach	Political negotiation Approach	Integrative Approach
Sork (1990)	Theory building	*		
Cervero & Wilson (1991)	Theory building		*	
Cervero & Wilson (1992)	Theory building		*	
Wilson & Cervero (1993)	Qualitative/case study		*	
Boer & Ellis (1993)	Theory building			*
Cervero & Wilson (1994b)	Theory building		*	
Maclean (1994)	Qualitative/interview		*	

Reference	Methodology	Traditional	Political negotiation	Integrative
Cervero & Wilson (1994c)	Theory building		*	
Wortham (1994)	Qualitative/interview			*
Mills & others (1995)	Qualitative/case study		*	
Peterson (1996)	Theory building		*	
Wilson & Cervero (1996c)	Theory building		*	
Murk & Walls (1997)	Theory building			*
Wilson & Cervero (1997a)	Theory building		*	
Barclay Jr. (1997)	Theory building	*		
Wilson & Cervero (1997b)	Theory building		*	
Yang & others (1998)	Quantitative/SEM		*	
Caffarella (1998-9)	Theory building			*
Blank & Russel (2000)	Theory building	*		
Mott & Hansman (2000)	Qualitative/case study		*	
McLean (2000)	Qualitative/case study			*
Lawler & King (2000)	Theory building			*
Mabry & Wilson (2001)	Qualitative/interview		*	
Hendricks (2001)	Quantitative/C-Corr.		*	
Parks (2002)	Qualitative/interview			*
Total		3	15	7

Table 2. Approaches / Research methodology Matrix

Method	Research methodology	Traditional approach	Political negotiation approach	Integrative approach	Total
Quantitative		0	2	0	2
Qualitative	Case study	0	3	1	4
	Interview	0	2	1	3
	Theory building	3	8	5	16

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Findings and Implication: The recent trends and issues of program planning

(1) Which approaches of program planning for adults have been frequently discussed for the last decade? As delineated in this literature review, the studies regarding adult program planning for the last decade can be categorized into three approaches: traditional, political negotiation, and integrative approach. As you can be seen in Table 1, Political negotiation approach has dominated the research agenda on program planning of adults for the last decade. While almost studies were conducted by Cervero and Wilson at the beginning of 90s, recently the interest of this approach appear to be expanded to other researchers as well. Also as shown in Table 1, integrative approach has provided empirical evidence that some features from both political negotiation approach and traditional approach are joined in a complex planning situation with the effort to build a theoretical framework.

The level of interest in traditional approach as a whole seems to have diminished. Only three studies were published for the last decade. It is possible to take the view that the emphasis of much research is shifting away from traditional approach toward political negotiation and/or integrative approach.

(2) Which research methodology has been frequently used for the last decade? Regardless of approaches, qualitative methodology has dominated for the last decade. However, considering of increasing political negotiation approach to explore how planning practice interfaces with issues of power and negotiation in various educational settings, is the mainstream in this field qualitative methods seem the best suited for this type of inquiry. On the other hand, , quantitative method plays an important role in terms of both developing a theoretical framework and providing empirical evidences in various settings. Both efforts are essential in order to link practice and theory.

This study investigated the features of three approaches as the theoretical frameworks. Among three approaches, political negotiation approach has viewed as the most popular research issue for the last decade. Integrative approach also has been frequently studied in recent years. The studies to develop traditional approach do not disappear in recent years as well. While some theorists are emphasizing issues of power and negotiation into the program planning model, as well as integrating them into traditional approach, the linear essence of the traditional model continues to play a dominant role for many practitioners. Wilson and Cervero (1996, b) also acknowledged that the importance of traditional approach should not be underestimated, because traditional approach has provided specific information regarding what planners should be done.
The efforts to build new theoretical frameworks such as political negotiation and integrative approach have mainly conducted through a review of literature for theory building. However, recently, in order to link practice and theory, both qualitative and quantitative studies are contributing to develop a theoretical framework and provide empirical evidences in various settings. Until today, qualitative methods are a mainstream in this field. However, as shown in Yang et al. (1998) study, sophisticated quantitative methods make a crucial contribution to enhancing a theoretical framework.

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