Develop the Emerging Adulthood by Education

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Introduction:

Emerging adulthood has been proposed as a new life stage between adolescence and young adulthood, lasting roughly from ages 18 to 25. Five features make emerging adulthood distinctive: identity explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood, and a sense of broad possibilities for the future. Emerging adulthood is found mainly in industrialized countries, where most young people obtain tertiary education and median ages of entering marriage and parenthood are around 30. There are variations in emerging adulthood within industrialized countries. It lasts longest in Europe, and in Asian industrialized countries, the self-focused freedom of emerging adulthood is balanced by obligations to parents and by conservative views of sexuality. In non-industrialized countries, although today emerging adulthood exists only among the middle-class elite, it can be expected to grow in the 21st century as these countries become more affluent.

"Emerging Adulthood" is a term used to describe a period of development spanning from about ages 18 to 29, experienced by most people in their twenties in Westernized cultures and perhaps in other parts of the world as well. It was initially defined by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain where, when, and why a new life stage of emerging adulthood appeared over the past half-century.
- Identify the five features that distinguish emerging adulthood from other life stages.
- Describe the variations in emerging adulthood in countries around the world.

The Five Features of Emerging Adulthood:

Five characteristics distinguish emerging adulthood from other life stages (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adulthood is:

1. the age of identity explorations;

2. the age of instability;

3. the self-focused age;

4. the age of feeling in-between; and

5. the age of possibilities.

Emerging adulthood is a particularly important stage in the life course to understand resilience because the important changes in functional capacity, educational achievement, and social roles are large and varied and have a significant influence on life course outcomes.

Emerging adulthood is a time between adolescents' reliance on parents and adults' long-term commitments in love and work, and during these years, emerging adults focus on themselves as they develop the knowledge, skills, and self-understanding they will need for adult life.

Adult education, distinct from child education, is a practice in which adults engage in systematic and sustained self-educating activities in order to gain new forms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values. It can mean any form of learning adults engage in beyond traditional schooling, encompassing basic literacy to personal fulfilment as a lifelong learner.

In particular, adult education reflects a specific philosophy about learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can and want to learn, that they are able and willing to take responsibility for the learning, and that the learning itself should respond to their needs.

Driven by what one needs or wants to learn, the available opportunities, and the manner in which one learns, adult learning is affected by demographics, globalization and technology. The learning happens in many ways and in many contexts just as all adults' lives differ. Adult learning can be in any of the three contexts, i.e.:

- Formal - Structured learning that typically takes place in an education or training institution, usually with a set curriculum and carries credentials;

- Non-formal - Learning that is organized by educational institutions but non credential. Non-formal learning opportunities may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and groups;

- Informal education - Learning that goes on all the time, resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, community or leisure (e.g. community baking class).

Conclusion:

The new life stage of emerging adulthood has spread rapidly in the past half-century and is continuing to spread. Now that the transition to adulthood is later than in the past, is this change positive or negative for emerging adults and their societies? Certainly, there are some negatives. It means that young people are dependent on their parents for longer than in the past, and they take longer to become full contributing members of their societies. A substantial proportion of them have

trouble sorting through the opportunities available to them and struggle with anxiety and depression, even though most are optimistic. However, there are advantages to having this new life stage as well. By waiting until at least their late twenties to take on the full range of adult responsibilities, emerging adults are able to focus on obtaining enough education and training to prepare themselves for the demands of today's information- and technology-based economy. Also, it seems likely that if young people make crucial decisions about love and work in their late twenties or early thirties rather than their late teens and early twenties, their judgment will be more mature and they will have a better chance of making choices that will work out well for them in the long run.

What can societies do to enhance the likelihood that emerging adults will make a successful transition to adulthood? One important step would be to expand the opportunities for obtaining tertiary education. The tertiary education systems of OECD countries were constructed at a time when the economy was much different, and they have not expanded at the rate needed to serve all the emerging adults who need such education. Furthermore, in some countries, such as the United States, the cost of tertiary education has risen steeply and is often unaffordable to many young people. In non-industrialized countries, tertiary education systems are even smaller and less able to accommodate their emerging adults. Across the world, societies would be wise to strive to make it possible for every emerging adult to receive tertiary education, free of charge. There could be no better investment for preparing young people for the economy of the future.

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