

# Construction of Postmodern Learning

## Theory and Practice in a Private School

KITAMURA Shinya

Graduate School of Science for Human Services, Ritsumeikan University

**Key words:** postmodern learning, transformation, reflexivity

This report is set in a *shijuku* (private school) named “Aura-manabinomori.” The school was established in 2000 in an attempt to construct a new theory of learning and to realize it within the framework of a private school as a result of the author’s view of the need for postmodern learning in the face of the status quo in education and its surroundings at the time. And over the past decade, a number of students, teachers and parents involved with the school have undergone remarkable transformations. In this report, I will provide concrete examples of how the learners at this school have experienced transformation, closely examine the various contexts of those involved, and discuss the present situations of postmodern learning and its structure.

In Chapter I, I argue that various educational problems arise from the dissociation of children’s real-life situation in the postmodern age and the educational system which was designed in the modern age, and that the conditions needed for postmodern learning can be extracted from the dissociation. Chapter II describes the prehistory and background of my private school, that is, how the motive for establishing it developed along with my personal learning experiences. Chapter III deals with the process through which I realized my “Manabinomori Initiative” and set up my private school for the purpose of postmodern learning by drawing on three important theories, and the mechanism that both transforms and maintains the learning space. Chapter IV focuses on “transformation,” the most important element in postmodern learning, in terms of social relationships, Transformative Learning Theory, the importance of having two conflicting elements, “transformation” and “construction,” and the hierarchical thinking which makes this possible. Chapter V is concerned with the importance of two kinds of reflexivity (N. Luhmann’s and A. Giddens’). In this postmodern age when things are growing more uncertain, it is vital for individuals to continue defining themselves self-reflexively, and the new way of learning makes this feasible.

The overall characteristic of this report is that it frequently refers to my involvement in the school. This is because I am creating the educational space, and continuing my involvement and transformation with students, their parents, teachers and educational activities.

The main purpose of this report is to theorize the practice of postmodern learning rather than to examine any particular theory. Its main focus is the analysis of individual episodes, and in order to theorize them, I consulted and quoted previous relevant studies. It should be noted that episodes are not arranged in an arbitrary manner; all episodes are based upon causal sequences which have contexts. The students, the teachers, the principal, and even the school itself have sequences of their own, and this builds up a synchronic relationship.