Association for Education & Ageing (AEA) in association with ForAge European network

LEARNING IN LATER LIFE: THEORY, POLICY & PRACTICE
an international conference held at the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK
April 5th – 7th 2016

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS
LEARNING IN LATER LIFE: THEORY, POLICY & PRACTICE

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Edited by Keith Percy

Organising committee for the Conference

Caroline Holland, Jonathan Hughes, Keith Percy, Jane Watts

Disclaimer

The majority of the contents of this publication are papers and power-point presentations brought to the AEA Conference April 5th -7th 2016 by the named authors. The contents have been subject to light, but not detailed, editing and proofing by the editor. However, they have not, in all cases, been fully standardised with regard to such elements as referencing and layout. Content and any errors remain the responsibility of authors. Copyright remains with authors. Copyright of photographs taken in the Conference remains with the photographer Dr. Val Bissland.
Conference Keynote Speakers

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This post-conference publication is published by the Association for Education and Ageing in April 2016. It has been prepared by Professor Keith Percy. The AEA is grateful to all speakers and presenters for their participation in the Conference and their contributions to this publication.

All of the photographs in this publication, except the ones on this page and the middle photograph on page 10, were taken during the Conference and are courtesy of Dr Val Bissland, Strathclyde University.
Publication of Papers, Power-point Presentations and Abstracts arising from the Conference

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Preface

The idea for the international conference *Learning in Later Life: Theory, Policy and Practice*, held in Milton Keynes, April 5th-7th 2016, had its origins in a) reflections and discussions in 2015 of ways to mark the 30th anniversary of the foundation in 1985 of the Association for Education & Ageing (AEA) and b) the end of EU funding for the Project *ForAge: Learning in later Life - Building on European experience* in which AEA had been a participant for 3.5 years. AEA took on some key international functions of the ForAge project which included the collation of data on learning in later life and its organisation into a Project database.

For 30 years AEA’s mission has been to promote the importance of learning in later life. However, it is true that throughout that period, the study of learning in later life has remained relatively marginal to how later life is regarded and understood. Additionally, European society has changed and those changes have not always been favourable to wider and more positive understandings of later life. Economic and financial crises have led, for example, to recent re-focusing of European initiatives towards young people and youth employment and away from other sectors, including older people. There are real questions for members of AEA concerning to what extent (and in what ways) research into, practice of and policy on learning in later life have made progress during the 30 years of AEA’s existence. In reviewing the experience of this conference, we return to these and other questions at the end of this publication, in the *End-piece*.

So AEA thought that it would be useful to take stock at this point and one of the ways of doing this was to bring together, from the United Kingdom but also from further afield in Europe, older people, practitioners, researchers, academics and policy-makers concerned with different aspects of learning in later life. The goals would be to hear about new research, to review good practice and to consider policy. AEA events are characterised by their friendly and inclusive atmosphere and this would be a pre-condition for this conference of clear thinking, calm reflection and agreement on implications.

The conference took place on the campus of the Open University, Walton Hall, near Milton Keynes. 41 people attended, including those who attended for only part of the conference. The majority of participants were British but participants from Austria, Belgium, Finland, Poland, and Portugal were also present. There were three keynote speakers, two other presenters in plenary sessions and eighteen presentations given in parallel sessions throughout the conference. In this post-conference on-line publication can be found out-puts from all of those twenty-three presentations. For some presentations that means a full paper, with power-point presentation and abstract; for most it means a power-point presentation and abstract; for a few it means an abstract only.

The presentations made in keynote and parallel sessions ranged widely. Papers included the disciplines of sociology and social theory, philosophy, psychology, theology, psychoanalysis, biology and more. There were papers reporting on empirical research not only in education but also in the medical, technological, health and other fields. There were presentations concerned with European projects and databases, mid-life transition, scamming, identity construction, volunteer learning mentors, wearable technologies, dementia care and migrant communities, memory and growth of the hippocampus and educational participation by older Chinese adults. Presentations on teaching and learning in later life included those on drama, experimental science, film-making and cultural tours.

In post-conference discussion and correspondence and in responses to an evaluation form distributed to participants a few days after the conference, comments on almost all aspects of the Conference were positive. “A magnificent experience”, one participant wrote; “all excellent” commented another; “definitely useful and a joy to attend” wrote a third.
There was a great deal of common ground among participants on why they attended the conference. They said that it was to hear about new ideas and to meet new people. Participants noted that their expectations of the conference included “some interesting new perspectives on the topic” and “stimulating ideas and new thinking about learning in later life”. Their expectations had been met. The programme, and the organisation of it, worked. One participant wrote that “it was not only the plenary sessions which provided stimulating ideas; there were one or two thought-provoking theoretical papers in parallel sessions”. Another observed “I felt I got even some new ideas on the topic. Thank you for the organisation. It was great that… there were sessions … [with an] opportunity to choose topics that interested me”. “Excellent range of presentations” observed one participant. The variety of methods of presentation and the ‘practical’ or practice-based presentations in some parallel sessions were mentioned with approval.

In terms of meeting new people, one participant commented that s/he “met some really interesting people and consequently extended my network. It was great to hear about the work in different countries”. Similarly, another felt that “it was great to meet new people and hopefully we can continue these discussions in future in one way or another.” Participants found friendliness and informality in the conference arrangements and felt welcome and involved, appreciating the opportunity to network with everyone including keynote speakers and presenters around the sessions.

Of course, negative but useful comments were made. Not everybody like having to choose between parallel sessions if they wanted to attend both simultaneous sessions. The timing of the conference was criticised – April is “a very busy time in the academic year”. Although (or perhaps because) international participants were present and making important contributions, the comment was made that it would have been valuable if there had been more of them present.

Respondents to the evaluation form were asked to identify what for them “was the most significant idea or issue raised during the conference”. The broad range of answers included:

- creativity and its importance in learning as well as in later life;
- the interesting issues raised by sessions on technology;
- the notion of the life course as “precarious” rather than “flexible” and retirement in the context of the “risk society”;
- the low profile/lack of acknowledgment of education for older adults within the wider research and policy context;
- the bleak policy future of older learners;
- what was the general understanding and perception of “research” in the learning in later life community and of how it should be evaluated;
- the need (particularly for the British) to have tighter notions of what counts as ‘informal learning’ in the field of later life learning.
KEY-NOTE AND PLENARY SESSION PRESENTERS

Professor Franz Kolland
University of Vienna, Austria

Identity Work and Lifelong Learning in Ageing Societies

“The ego doesn’t age” Hannah Arendt

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

Viewing ageing and identity against the background of psychology, sociology and cultural sciences, the debate spans between stability and change. For sociologists, social role identities are key components of the self-concept, perceptions locating individuals in the larger matrix of social relationships. Identities reflect the system of social positions held by an individual. Psychological concepts deal with personal identity as a result of tackling successful developmental tasks, and within cultural studies we find images of life stages.

When we examine identity, we first encounter continuity and coherence. Psychology and sociology often presuppose a unity and consistency that remains constant over time. However, warranted doubts are raised against the assumption of a stable and consistent identity over the course of a lifetime. Is the experience of ageing not the antithesis of identity as continuity over time?

Recent research puts the narrative identity work in front and underscores the importance of the conception of change later in life. Self-identity is thus no longer seen as something that is given but appears as something that has to be routinely created in the reflexive activities of the individual.

Lifelong learning is an important engine within identity work and reflexive activities. The ongoing reflexive construction of the self occurs as a response to ongoing uncertainty and risk.

Paper: Identity Work and Lifelong Learning in Ageing Societies

Why are we concerned with identity?

Social role identities are key components of the self-concept, perceptions locating individuals in the larger matrix of social relationships. These identities reflect the system of social positions held by an individual (Phyllis Moen et al. 2000). In the 1960s and 70s, old age was seen as a threat to identity because the transition into retirement was regarded as a role loss (Ernest Burgess). Seniors are faced with the dilemma of the “roleless role”, an absence of well-articulated, age-appropriate expectations and standards of behaviour by which to structure everyday life. Since the 1990s there
has been increased demand on individuals to remain active in old age and cease to regard retirement as identity-constitutive (WHO). And once again seniors find themselves in a dilemma, caught between refusal and the excessive demand/marketisation of old age.

At any rate, what we are observing are two changes:

*demographic changes – longer life* as a result of the compression of mortality – and *social-structural transformation processes* (individualization) that significantly affect identity work in old age.

In longevity societies in which individuals can rely on a “safe life”, as Arthur Imhof (1988) put it, maintaining a consistent single identity is insufficient and life-long learning is required. This is also necessary because advanced age represents a novelty in the social fabric and is normatively under-determined. *We need to construct new identities.*

Which concepts from the social sciences are available to us for describing and explaining the processes of identity formation in old age? Can new concepts – such as A. Sen’s concept of plural identities, Straub and Renn’s concept of identity in transition or Butler’s notion of frailty identity crisis – provide us with new approaches to understanding identity formation in advanced age? What role does lifelong learning play for identity creation in advanced age? How can experience and transformation, as the two essential elements of lifelong learning, be linked with the concept of identity?

And: How can we counter the accusation that all these concepts from identity theory are implicitly normative and aimed at the “successful construction of identity”?

**Models of identity development: Continuity-Consistency-Stages**

In studying identity, we are initially confronted with consistency and continuity. In addressing “personal identity”, psychology and sociology often work on the assumption of lasting unity and consistency (Abeles 2006). In developmental psychology, there is considerable evidence that suggests identity formed during adolescence remains central throughout one’s life. And in sociology there is evidence of a socially stabilising identity that results from interaction processes. Echoing Wohlrab-Sahr (2006), Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2012) describe identity as continuous attempts to develop a feeling of continuity and coherence. Identity needs to be actively structured and stabilised. It is further necessary to match criteria and expectations of recognition. Although the focus lies on the process of handling current issues, the biography of the subject plays a vital role as well. Former experiences are crucial for the ability to handle current issues; also current experiences must be processed in a way that ensures a consistent history of the self.

Cultural historical research shows that between the 16th and 19th centuries, it was above all an iconographic representation of the human lifespan that shaped notions of the ageing process: the staircase of life. As Ehmer (1990, 1996) points out, the model of the staircase of life assumes a uniform and constant life. This representation attempts to create order in the face of the uncertainty of life. The first half of life is represented as an ascent that reaches its peak at the age of forty. The highest level of the double staircase is reached the age of fifty. The second half of life is presented as a descent.

The physical and mental decline that becomes increasingly visible with each decade concludes with death. The second half of the staircase of life legitimizes the displacement of the old by the young and lets the old know that they would be met with ridicule and contempt if they didn’t accept their
retreat. The stairway of life is simultaneously a representation of ageing as a biological process, an incremental loss of physical and mental ability ending in complete decay and ultimately in death. Lifespan and identity are thus presented as biologically determined in these depictions.

Erik Erikson’s model of phase-related identity development has received particular attention. This is in part due to the fact that he identifies this model as a psychosocial activity, an identity development shaped by cultural circumstances and social influences. Erik Erikson took the view that the formation of the personality structure is never complete and that identity develops over the course of one’s life. Human growth consists of a sequence of phase-specific crises that must be overcome. The two most important elements to Erikson’s concept of identity are continuity and reciprocity. Continuity refers to the comforting feeling of consistency of a person’s essential characteristics. A person’s identity also has to be seen and recognised by others. Reciprocity refers to mutual recognition and the formation of identity in social interactions. Erikson emphasises not only the importance of society but also of the historical period, because the individual only has a limited number of meaningful models for the creation of identity for each time period.

Daniel Levinson provides a continuation of Erik Erikson’s epigenetic model of development. He introduces the concept of life structure into his conception of development, which he uses to define an internal life pattern that is dominant at a specific point in individual development. He identifies the individual’s personally significant relationships to various other individuals in the external world as a central component of this life pattern. The self develops and differentiates itself within this process of development, retention and the expansion of significant social relationships. Levinson did not anchor his theory in psychodynamic theory or in the central role of tensions or conflicts that emerge during successive stages. He postulated instead that evolving physiological, psychological, and role-oriented life changes influenced major life transitions.

New research on identity development: Discontinuity – U-curve

Over the last few decades, both the stages model of ageing and the notion of continuity of personality into late life have been called into question.

Personality changes in old age
Recent empirical studies have underscored the importance of the conception of change later in life (Lucas & Donnellan 2011; Specht, Luhmann & Geiser 2014). According to the findings of Specht, Luhmann and Geiser (2014), people’s personalities in advanced age change at a similar rate to those of young adults. The study refutes the prevailing view among psychologists that the personality increasingly stabilises through the course of one’s life.

For their research, the authors analysed more than 23,000 people surveyed between 2005 and 2009. Consistency and change in personality were analysed by examining personality types across adulthood and old age using data from 2 nationally representative panel studies from Germany (N = 14,718; 16-82 years) and Australia (N = 8,315; 15-79 years). In both samples, the Big Five personality traits were measured twice across a period of 4 years.

This population-representative data shows that the personalities of adults under the age of 30 and adults over the age of 70 change more than in any other phase of life. The researchers were surprised to learn that the personality changes dramatically in old age: up to 25 per cent of people of
a certain personality type change after the age of 70. In contrast to young adults, the personality changes of seniors do not follow typical patterns of maturation. A wide spectrum of personality changes was observed. Older people suddenly became less controlled, lived more impulsively and gained self-esteem and inner peace.

The U-curve of life satisfaction
Quality of life research along the life course is another interesting background for identity construction. Life satisfaction research has not only been a standard topic in recent psychosocial research but also in social gerontology. What results does life satisfaction research demonstrate with regard to ageing? A variety of surveys have demonstrated a U-shaped relationship: younger and older people tend to be more satisfied while most studies indicate a low point in mid-life: between 45 and 55 years old (Donovan and Halpern 2002, p. 14) and somewhat earlier (35 to 45) in the international study by Helliwell (2002, 12). Life satisfaction dramatically increases with advanced age, a phenomenon referred to as a paradox of well-being considering the increasing prevalence of disease in old age.

Happiness peaks in our eighties (Stone, Schwartz, Broderick and Deaton 2010). We become happier when we grow older. The U-bend shows up in studies not just of global well-being but also of hedonic oremotional well-being.

The comparatively lower values of life satisfaction in midlife can be explained to a large extent by perceptions of uncertainty (income, job insecurity). The relatively high degree of life satisfaction among older age groups when compared with younger age groups is explained by internal locus of control, meaning that the experience of internal control is an important personal resource that explains the paradox of well-being. Self-regulation is an ability that gains central importance for life satisfaction in old age. When the influence of one’s own mental state is perceived and judged more frequently than those of others/from without, and self-determination is low, there is – according to our data (Rosenmayr & Kolland 2002) as well as data from the SHARE study – a low level of life satisfaction.

Additional explanations are given by Paul Baltes and Laura Carstensen. The results are generally consistent with Baltes’ theory of increased “wisdom” and emotional intelligence with age, wherein decreased negative affective states could be a result of increasing wisdom, and with Carstensen et al.’s socioemotional selectivity theory, wherein older people have an increased ability to self-regulate their emotions and view their situations positively.

However, there is always a possibility that variations are the result not of changes during the life-course, but of differences between cohorts. A 70-year-old European may feel different to a 30-year-old not because he is older, but because he grew up during the Second World War and was thus formed by different experiences. But the accumulation of data undermines the idea of a cohort effect.

Theoretical approaches to explaining transformation and discontinuity of identity in old age
So there are – on the basis of empirical research - justifiable doubts regarding assumptions of stability and continuity of identity throughout life. The experience of ageing us such is the antithesis
of continuity over time. Recent research is oriented towards identity work and not identity stability (e.g. Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

Individualisation

There are also doubts regarding considerations of continuity against the backdrop of socio-structural transformation. According to Straub and Renn (2002), “identity is shifting”. We shall deal with this shift from more of a sociological perspective than a psychological perspective. In so doing, we will have the support of John Goldthorpe (2016), who in his most recent publication "Sociology as a Population Science" questions the social determinacy of identity. His considerations are based on an individualistic paradigm of society (Goldthorpe 2016). This paradigm is supported by the observation of high variability in lifespan and old age. This paradigm is also supported by the assumption that it is not so much social norms that determine the actions of the individual, but that the individual operates through selective actions through informed choice.

In practical terms choice and choice models are recently the most prominent models stimulating a new care culture in nursing homes.

Actions are selected rationally based on information and daily decisions. This is not thought to be some form of meta-rationality but rather an everyday rationality supported by a variety of identity constructions and learning processes.

Here is an example from a blog by John B.

*The question, “Who am I?” is the one I asked myself often during my first year of retirement. So accustomed to judging my own worth and purpose by what I did in my work as a high school teacher, I began in retirement to feel like some hedonistic rebel, self-gratification becoming, for the first time since childhood, my primary concern.* [http://indianaohindiana.com/2015/03/28/avoiding-the-identity-crisis-of-aging/](http://indianaohindiana.com/2015/03/28/avoiding-the-identity-crisis-of-aging/)

In addition to questioning the holistic perspective in terms of social action, there is also leeway for shaping lifestyle that results from a general weakening of the social-structural determinants of life. It is now becoming increasingly clear that diverse styles of activity are being individually formed. These various styles of activity can be attributed to independent force with its own quality. They are not primarily understood as the product of social-structural conditions and established social norms and practices, but rather as an expression of individual action.

Is the overall identity of the ego in a state of turmoil? Anthony Giddens speaks of the “tribulations of the self”, fears with which the individual must cope which are generated by social-spatial processes of delimitation, consumer culture and enormous changes in values. If these “tribulations” influence all of us, how much more do they influence older people in conditions of vulnerability and limited power?

In his book Modernity and Self-Identity, Anthony Gidden’s has famously claimed that in the context of the post-traditional order of late-modern societies “the self becomes a reflexive project” (Giddens, 1991). According to Giddens this is not simply an option, i.e. something that individuals can decide to engage with or not. He takes the stronger view that in late-modern societies the self “has to be reflexively made”. Self-identity is thus no longer seen as something that is given but appears as something “that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual” (ibid, pp.52).
According to Giddens, the fact that life decisions can be revised is typical of the second modernity. The content of identity is no longer constant; identity does not remain the same or develop according to a "stage plan," but changes along with rapid social transformation and with the possibilities for choice and a changing, variable lifestyle. This causes identity to change in terms of expansion and growth. When compared to a premodern society, stratified both vertically (classes) and horizontally (staircase of life), in which identities were fixed and unchangeable, the modern identity is temporalised.

The development of welfare state safety-net systems since the end of the 19th century has taken some of the pressure off social action. It has meant that the individual does not experience this phase of life as an individual deficit but potentially as "late freedom" (Rosenmayr 1983). The influence of the welfare state has acted as a powerful individualising factor by providing the individual with a significant collective safety net. This "guarantee of help" from the state expands the individual’s scope of action. The individualisation of lifestyles has grown significantly and has brought with it both new social freedoms as well as uncertainties and new risks.

Pluralisation

While previous social epochs relied on prefabricated identity patterns that came from the church, parties and class affiliations, late modernity is more about identity work (Cohen and Taylor 1978; Tony Watson 2008).

Differentiation, pluralisation and detraditionalisation increasingly free the individual from familiar bonds such as class, profession, church, family and gender. Under these conditions, identity can and must be much more radically constructed and constantly modelled because framing institutions are losing their importance. Fragmentation, rupture, dissipation and contingency have taken the place of continuity, coherence and progress. This results in opportunities for more self-determination but also the risk of failure.

Identity work is no longer a matter of adapting to existing (unquestionable) standards but is about adapting to an increasingly less traditional society and the obstinacy of individuals. This adaptation work does not necessarily give rise to consistent patterns and a resulting consistent identity, but rather to multiple identities. The result is neither a stable identity throughout an individual’s lifespan nor phases of development as formulated by Erik Erikson. Identity work is much more a constant process of production that doesn’t take place with the goal of adaptation but seeks a way to fit between individual wishes and social reality.

As the structure of society changes, ideas that define identity as something that unmistakably and clearly demarcate the individual from his or her environment lose their significance. According to Amartya Sen (2007: 34), identities are "decidedly plural" and the importance of one identity doesn’t have to lessen the importance of another identity. No person is an island. In reality, every person belongs to several social groups. And each one of these groups can provide the individual with a sense of belonging and loyalty. Belonging to a group of seniors doesn’t exclude belonging to another or several other groups. We wish to posit plural affiliations and social contexts for a new culture of old age and ageing. Identity work consists of deciding which of our identities are important and weighing the relative importance of those various identities (Sen 2007: 38).

Societal development processes in the current "second" modern period allow less and less for “the assumption of homogenous or supposedly authentic living environments” (Kondratowitz 1999, 107).
Furthermore, the notion of difference and diversity experiences from which decisive lessons can be learned has taken the place of central perspectives (Daatland & Biggs 2004, 224). Using the patchwork-metaphor, Keupp (2008) emphasises that a subject consists of several sub-identities (Straus & Höfer, 1997).

Results from studies on the quality of life based on the SHARE data point to similar conclusions. According to these – our own – studies, various dimensions of quality of life and identity change in very different ways in the second half of life.

The parameters control and pleasure, for example, show very few changes when comparing age groups (-6.5% and -3.9% between the highest and lowest observed values), while the aspects of autonomy and self-realisation showed significant differences between age groups: 91% of people between the ages of 61 and 65 say that life provides them with many opportunities while only 70% of those over 81 report the same. The number of people who say they are able to do the things they would like to do decreases by 12.5% between these age groups.

**Identity and Frailty**

The question of identity in old age once again becomes radically important against the backdrop of a long life when frailty, mental changes and social restrictions occur. Is a “frailty identity crisis” being assumed for the final phases of life (Butler & Fillit 2011)?

The link between frailty and cognitive and affective processes is of interest in the context of what has been described as the “frailty identity crisis.” This sense of “crisis” has been proposed to occur when challenging transitions from independence to frailty are accompanied by maladaptive psychological responses (Fillit and Butler 2009). Affected individuals are said to experience a crisis of identity and a decline in psychological well-being as they are faced with the losses in health and independence that mark the transition from fitness to frailty.

Whether this “identity crisis” is intrinsic to ageing, or whether it differs substantially from the challenges presented to anyone faced with disability is not well established. While it currently remains unclear how low psychological well-being in frail individuals differs from adjustment difficulties in disability and chronic illness, there are reasons to suspect a difference. Frailty is a state in which many (usually smaller) deficits exert a combined influence; this is distinct from a single disease or functional impairment in the usual chronic illness or disability model. The cumulative effect of deficit accumulation over time may afford some people the perspective of gradual accommodation, while the normative effect of seeing other people facing similar challenges is likely also an important mediating effect for many. Further research is needed to address this issue.

The gerontological perspective indicates a new identity for the phase of late life. This requires stereotypical images of ageing and age-related prejudices to be corrected. Both the perspective of deficit and the perspective of activism are insufficient for self-constitution. In order to reduce hardening and inflexibility, a fluctuating identity is considered most favourable.

**Identity Work and Lifelong Learning**
The risks of the doing identity pose two central questions: against the background of these social conditions and imperatives, how can a self-determined age identity be formed that is not determined heteronomously?

And what might an age identity look like at the end of life when activity concepts and anti-ageing concepts lose their meaning?

People’s identities are subject to a constant process of evaluation. A new status must be negotiated at intervals, specifically in the space between cultural goals and offerings and individual needs. This space is one of the social networks and affinity groups where our identity is constituted through interactions. The self is reflexively constituted and as such is imbedded in processes of lifelong learning. Furthermore, we have educational processes that go beyond everyday learning and enrich the reflexive self through meta-perspectives. Can this enrichment contribute to stabilizing identity crises but also lead to a fluctuating identity? This brings us to a normative provision of education. Is the goal of educational processes to support and push discontinuity and disruption rather than stabilise and maintain a previously established identity? Does long life require targeted transformation to avoid slipping into solidification and sentimentality?

Although questions have been raised about the empirical adequacy of Giddens’s diagnosis, his views have contributed to the idea that late-modern societies require a new kind of lifelong learning that is concerned with the ongoing reflexive construction of the self in response to ongoing uncertainty and risk (e.g., Hake, 1998; 1999). Such learning is highly individualistic and individualised as it is focused on ‘self-actualisation’ and ‘self-realisation’ (Giddens, 1991, pp.214).

And why are we concerned with education in the context of identity development through a lifetime and into old age? The idea is not to promote action in the sense of homo economicus. Empirical decision research has also provided clear evidence that real agents act with only limited rationality. There is a widespread muddling of actors (Lindblom 1959). It is more a matter of putting actions in motion that correspond with homo sapiens, including transformation and liberation. Action is to be understood as an activity that, by having a forming character, is liberating. If we understand action (in old age) as an act of creation, then it is an act of consciously becoming active in which reflexive learning processes are essential. This can also include non-action; action, in other words, which is free of business and active ageing. Max Weber’s idea of “apatheic ecstasy” is applicable here.

The assumption is that meaning is a significant component for enduring action. The second modernity has seen a willingness arise to constantly “model around”. New studies have shown the importance of concern for one’s own sense of understanding.

The word “sense” requires reference to a structure of meaning for the necessary understanding of the condition and life satisfaction of older and old people. This establishes a relationship to Daniel Levinson’s (1978) concept of life structure which describes a particular inner life pattern. Elements of this structure of meaning must be borne by sense beliefs in order to gain emotional relevance for the overall personality. The structure of meaning is the structure that is particularly important for life optimisation from the totality of the knowledge and value systems of individuals, their relationship to their environment and their changes over time. The structure of meaning links perceived daily action with the overarching life plan, a temporally organised personal system of meaning. Overarching concepts such as the life plan allow for an evaluation of the past and a coordinated plan for the future.
Resources are required for successful identity work in old age. One resource is recognition. “Without the context of recognition”, writes Heiner Keupp (2015: 40), “one cannot gain sovereignty over one’s life”. Recognition is not self-evident in late modernity; it must be acquired. It we take the example of recognition of ageing, seniority above employment experience, then a stronger devaluation process has taken place. One possible alternative to gainful employment is volunteer work. It provides recognition and meaning.

A third resource is affiliation. This concerns the we-element of identity. Successful identity work requires social inclusion. If this social inclusion is located in social proximity, then it represents a new culture of ageing cantered around post-traditional relationships (Keupp 2015). This refers to social settings beyond family and neighbours. It concerns the distribution of roles that place individual needs and relationships, in which tasks and boundaries are negotiated, to the fore.

Identity work and experiential learning?

Experience never gets old. Intern, a film directed by Nancy Meyers, stars Robert de Niro as 70-year-old widower Ben Whittaker. He discovers that retirement is not what he wanted. Seizing an opportunity to get back in the game, he becomes a senior intern at an online fashion site. The main character Ben Whittaker tells Jules (Anne Hathaway), “You’re never wrong for doing the right thing”. De Niro’s Whittaker applied for this job because he was bored in retirement. Could he not maybe have done some charitable volunteer work?

In contrast with older approaches to adult education, the focus since the 1990s has been on experiential learning. This approach seeks both to incorporate, recognise and facilitate the daily pragmatic self-learning that people practise, and to expand the narrow scope of this daily learning. The older the learner, the greater the role that experience plays in learning processes. The concentration of practical relevance to life is paradigmatic of learning in late adulthood. It is important to note that interest and motivation to learn are more likely to arise from personal and practical concerns than from institutional arrangements.

Life experience is tied in with experiential learning. The aspect of life understanding and insight come into play in this concept. There is a high correlation to age: although the passage of time alone is no guarantee of insight and wisdom into life, it does take time to not just acquire life experience but also to integrate it into a new coherent perception. This includes occupational learning, conflicts and dealings with other people, being confronted with extreme situations (e.g. car accidents) and experiencing physical and mental changes over the course of one’s life.

We can assume that our thinking becomes more complex and more “profound” as we get older, that we are increasingly able to make connections, to tolerate that which is contradictory and to reinterpret and gain new insight into previously existing aspects of our knowledge (Kruse & Wahl 2010: 140f.). Practical knowledge is of great importance when dealing with limiting situations such as serious diseases or one’s own mortality.

Meyer-Drawe (2008) defines learning as the ability to change existing conditions. It is through such changes that individuals gain experience. Learning means changing behaviour that has come about through experience. According to Meyer-Drawe (2008), learning experience only comes into play when one becomes aware of something new, unexpected or even surprising. This creates a distinction between learning and maturing as an internal process of change.
Experiential learning cannot therefore be limited to individual perspective. Learning cannot be reduced to a process of accumulating knowledge and skills, which effectively leaves the subject uninvolved. Learning is fused with the learner’s personal history of learning. This history should be understood as a history of conflicts and conflict-ridden disputes. This results in changes. Learning is also always a transformation of the learning individual and of the social context.

**Outlook**

In industrial societies the prevalent model of activity is the "busy ethic", which is influenced by a purpose-oriented theory of action and also applies to ageing. It seems that if we wish to go beyond merely superficial "wellbeing" we need a model that includes *serenity* as well as self-determination. This does not assume one single ideal type of age identity but postulates plurality as a framework. This plurality of age identities allows for an increase in realms of action (see Weymann 1989) and more freedom. What we need is a concept of action that is neither sociostructurally determined nor fully normatively determined and constricted. We need to continue working on a concept of action that is determined and limited in diverse ways through the need for decisions, but also fuels the capacity to create.

[List of references not yet available]
Professor Chris Phillipson
University of Manchester, UK

Developing new policy agenda for later life learning: critical perspectives from a changing life course

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

This paper examines the reconstruction of the life course associated with changes in the move from work to retirement. Some of the relevant indicators here include: the diversity of work endings; the rise of precarious working; the upward move of pension ages; and the retreat from retirement as a major stage in the life course. The paper will examine current responses in the field of lifelong learning and training to these developments. It will conclude with an assessment of the policy responses required to develop a new institutional landscape for older learners.
Dr Jane Watts
Independent consultant, UK

Lifelong learning for changing times: mid-life and retirement transitions

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

Later life learning has been characterised by overlapping and sometimes confusing terminology. Policy for learning in this later life phase is at risk of being even less clear and, in some cases, is noticeable only by its absence from the policy discourse (BIS/SFA, 2015).

This paper takes a fresh look at later life learning by attempting to identify key transition points and life phases, not necessarily based on chronological age, where learning could have a key role to play and where a policy response is much neglected. Drawing on the work of the UK National Older Learners’ Group and recent strategic developments in a further education institution, the paper examines the opportunities and challenges for older people’s learning offered by current policy concerns and the apparently contradictory funding strategies. For example, much of the current policy focuses on keeping people in work for longer, but funding for vocational learning for older people has been withdrawn. Informal learning for older people in the fourth age is praised while funding for community learning decreases.

Narrow and functionalist agenda appear to be driving the policy response to the learning needs of older people, but they do not go completely unchallenged; initiatives are brought about through community and university partnerships, community learning offered by local authorities, learning provided in and through some unlikely avenues outside the usual learning providers (and sometimes formed through new partnerships). However, government responses to older age rarely mention learning at all. At the same time, the ‘new’ organisers of learning do not necessarily see themselves as providing education, thus risking the continuum of understanding and practice of years of community learning and community development learning. The contribution concludes by examining whether some new definitions could support policy directions to enable older people’s learning to be offered in a more coherent and strategic way than currently

Paper: Lifelong learning for changing times: mid-life and retirement transitions

Introduction

I have been thinking about transitions - and specifically some of the transitions in later life, learning, working and earning. ‘Transition’ matters now as a concept because it is used in current policy and practice. This can be seen, for example, in the Gulbenkian Foundation’s funding stream called ‘Transitions in Later Life’ - which is used to fund, amongst others, a project around the retirement
transitions. The terminology can be found in recent reports, including, for example, the Positive Ageing Associates’ report for the Gulbenkian Foundation (Robertson 2014) and the report Ageing: the silver lining for the Local Government Association (Robertson, 2015). I am not completely sure about the use of this terminology. - but we can see why it might be useful. The good thing about the concept of transition is that it removes specific ‘ages’ from the equation, allowing people to self-define - although I might refer to some specific ages later in this talk, on the basis that chronological age is sometimes useful.

Later life learning is characterised by overlapping and sometimes confusing terminology. Policy for learning in this later life phase is at risk of being even less clear and, in some cases, is noticeable only by its absence from the policy discourse (BIS/SFA, 2015).

We need to take a fresh look at later life learning by attempting to identify key transition points and life phases, not necessarily based on chronological age, where learning could have a key role to play and where a policy response is much neglected.

This paper draws on the work of the National Older Learners’ Group (NIACE 2015) and recent strategic developments in a further education institution to look at the opportunities and challenges for older people’s learning offered by current UK policy concerns and some apparently contradictory funding strategies. For example, much current policy focuses on keeping people in work for longer, but funding for vocational learning for older people is not generally available. Informal learning for older people in the fourth age is praised, while funding for community learning decreases. Similarly, great concern is being shown to keep the mid-life workforce in work - but policy, from funding for learning to pension policy, tends to ensure that this workforce is discriminated against and sometimes unable to continue in work or training for work.

Narrow and functionalist agenda appear to be driving the policy response to the learning needs of older people, but they do not go completely unchallenged. Initiatives are brought about through community and university partnerships, community learning offered by local authorities, learning provided in and through some unlikely avenues outside the usual learning providers and sometimes formed through new partnerships. However, government responses to older age rarely mention learning at all. At the same time, the ‘new’ organisers of learning do not necessarily see themselves as providing education, thus risking the continuum of understanding and practice of years of community learning and community development learning.

Many of the ideas behind this talk came from reflecting on the recent Mid-life Career Review project (NIACE 2015). This ground-breaking project led by the organisation formerly known as NIACE (now the Learning and Work Institute) and supported by the UK government tested (not for the first time) the idea of providing career education opportunities for people in mid-life (roughly 50+) to see if this would support their ability to stay in work for longer. This was a response to the raising of the state pension age, the ending of a compulsory retirement age and the risk that these changes might bring about increased rather than decreased poverty in old age. But during the Mid-life Career Review project, another thought kept crossing my mind. What about those people who just do not want to work for longer? What about those who are excluded from the workplace but who, for reasons of relative poverty, most need to work.
Do people really want longer working lives? Some research gives an overwhelming ‘yes’ (McNair, 2012; Hyde and Phillipson, 2014). But are we sure about that? The research was mainly carried out before many people in the UK had their state pension ages raised. It is also true that there is a tendency that those who can afford to leave do leave. In some professions this currently causes crises in staffing levels. The profession of doctors is one example. So what drives retirement decisions and what are the different implications for lifelong learning? There is a range of factors – for example, we are currently in the UK seeing a campaign by women whose state pension age has risen more quickly than they expected.

Thinking again about the demographics - it seems that there is little discussion about the differences between mid-life and older (third) age and the overall picture. Very few people work in paid work into later older (fourth) age but there are a few exceptions. We need to assess our possibilities as our lives change and this was where the Midlife Career Review pilot Project was important.

As we age:
- If we need money, our choices are clear but hard to achieve.
- If we face other pressures (for example, care of older relatives or friends or of grandchildren or youngsters) matters become more complicated.
- If we develop health difficulties / bereavement or other significant life-changes it can be very difficult to cope.

And if all those things happen – as they do to some - then an older person is really up against it. We know that some older people decide to stay in work. Currently in the UK - almost 10% of over 65s work (Robertson, 2014 op.cit.).

Joseph Coleman, an American journalist, recently published the book Unfinished Work; the struggle to build an aging American workforce. It looks at case studies from across the developed world (Japan, the US, Sweden, France) and across various walks of life. It deals with perceptions of retirement and working lives, approaches to retraining and training and is refreshingly honest about the balance between need and the desire to work. The picture Coleman paints, as we might expect, is a complex one full of serious issues to be confronted. The current situation works well for the relatively rich and well-educated (so long as they stay healthy and preferably can retain either their existing job or downsize slightly within it). For everyone else - especially poor people and particularly in the USA – life is difficult.

It appears still to be the case in the United Kingdom, despite skills shortages in the labour market, that if you are made redundant in your 50’s there is little likelihood of finding another job (and especially another commensurate job). For this reason the UK Government is currently running pilot projects through its Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to support older unemployed workers. It is estimated that there are 1.2 million people in the UK, aged between 50 years and State Pension age who are currently unemployed or inactive but who would like to work. If just half of these were to move into employment, it is estimated by the DWP that Gross Domestic Product could be boosted by up to £25 billion a year. It is has also been shown that women who are able to stay in work are also more keen to stay in work for longer. This is the broad picture but all these statistics need further scrutiny and underpinning from qualitative research.
There are real challenges even for those who are thinking of staying in the same work. Jobs are changing and older people at work still miss out on training. Sometimes it is not offered to them, at other times they do not recognise the relevance of it to them. In other words, there is both actual discrimination and internalised discrimination.

Older people, too, should be able to learn about changing vocational directions as new technology develops and as the economy changes. We need to understand the barriers to such learning. It is quite possible that the UK could learn on this from other European countries. Perhaps the ForAge database would show what work has already been done elsewhere in Europe in this area.

**Work, learning and policy**

In a recent study older respondents reported that they were less likely to want work-related training but that they were also less likely to expect to be offered it (Hyde and Phillipson, 2014). However, situational barriers such as financial and time constraints have been consistently shown to be the most important reasons why people do not participate in learning and/or training later in life.

In the UK, one person in three is over 50, and the numbers are rising. People are living longer and while some of these years are healthy active retirement, others are spent in poor health. In both cases, learning can make a major contribution both to the wellbeing of older people and their contribution to society and the economy. However, the potential is often wasted, because few older people participate in learning, and what is available to them is poorly coordinated (Commission on the Voluntary Sector and Ageing 2014). Of course, once people do retire it does not necessarily mean that they do not continue to contribute to society in a range of ways - older people are employers, volunteers, civic and civil activists etc and not to mention educators.

What are the implications (opportunities and challenges?) for lifelong learning of extending working lives in the vocational and informal arenas? Contradictions are at play when it comes to later life learning policy. Firstly, learning is seen as a ‘good thing’ which brings benefits, but there is little or no funding for it. We are encouraged to stay in work for as long as possible, but will need to fund our own retraining. Employer discrimination against older people in the workforce is not diminishing in tandem (Altmann 2015). Despite the benefits, older people are much less likely to undertake any kind of learning than those in middle age and this is especially true for those with less money and less previous education (McNair 2012). The benefits of learning in later life were identified by the National Older Learners’ Group in 2015 (NIACE 2015).

**Reflections**

Failure to cope with numbers that are well - known is not a surprise - the demographics have been talked about for a long time. So who in this equation needs to learn the most? It seems to me it is the policy makers and not the potential learners who need to change.

What are the lived realities of people’s lives? Poverty is a factor which has not been given sufficient consideration. But the interlinked nature of relative wealth, wellbeing, good health, positive relationships with others and having a ‘good’ older age has been understood for a long time.
Why do individuals not mention learning when reflecting on what they should do next unless they are specifically asked about it? This is illustrated in previous learning participation surveys (NIACE 2012) and my own work on pre-retirement learning (Watts and Robey 2013). Learning and education are not on our agenda unless we start to look for them and find them not there.

Not enough attention is given to the effort made by older people which is not paid - whether caring for other older people or even younger, volunteering, civic involvement or a whole host of other activities. Surely it is also not just about active citizenship but about people having the chance to do things with their time that is not just concerned with earning money.

The creation of the false dichotomy of the so called intergenerational war between the ‘baby boomers’ - the ‘haves’ - and the young - the ‘have nots’ is most unfortunate. This is entirely delusory; there are poor people in both groups. Class, gender and race are the main determinants.

Moreover, the issues are not just about individuals and about learning, work, employment and pensions. Our society, in neglecting to meet individual needs has moved to remove solidarity and group identity. This is part of a much wider debate. However, it is notable that the trade unions, as one example of group solidarity, have responded very positively (as you might expect) to the notion of mid-life career review which is now embedded in practice of the union learning representatives.

**Conclusions**

When it comes to ageing, learning and earning (or income) we can see, perhaps, three key life phases and two or three major transitions. Specifically the latter include the potential transition in mid-life and the more certain transition into retirement.

We know that for the majority of people little learning is available for the transition which includes retirement from paid work (Watson and Robey 2013). Patterns of paid work are changing as more people do at least some paid work in later life (Phillipson 2014; Coleman 2015; Commission on Voluntary Sector on Ageing; NIACE 2015). This is different for everyone, especially since there is no longer a compulsory retirement age. The period from whenever retirement takes place to whenever later older age commences learning is not the same length for everyone. The transition into much older age can contain a significant need for learning, including in care settings. It is not necessarily available.

This analysis has some differences from the perspective of Schuller and Watson. Their *Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning* (Schuller and Watson 2009) looked at a whole new approach to dividing the life course into four quartiles and demanded more resources for learning in the final half of life. While the Inquiry particularly pointed out the inequalities in the 75+ quartile, there is a new need to look again and even harder for retraining and new learning in the third, 50+, quartile. There are some helpful suggestions in Schuller and Watson; its ideas could still drive improved policy thinking.

The implications for learning are huge but in the UK state supported learning available to older people is reducing not increasing. The informal self-organised sector is becoming ever stronger; that, at least, offers a glimpse of some hope.
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What is ForAge?

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

The ForAge Project: Forage for Later-life Learning: Building on European Experience’ was funded by the European Union Grundtvig Programme as a multi-lateral network for the period, January 2012 – December 2014. There were 16 network partners from 14 countries. Leicester University was the lead partner and the Association for Education and Ageing played a prominent role in the Project’s activities.

What led to the emergence of the ForAge network? It was felt that many useful learning experiences for older people, funded by the EU, were getting lost; that older people were no longer a focus in Europe despite demographic changes and that older people were increasingly absent from adult education. The ForAge Project was designed to make wider and better use of all the rich later life learning experiences funded through Grundtvig and elsewhere; building upon them, sharing information, analysing and assessing the value and impact on education and ageing policies, disseminating research evidence, and creating networks to do this.

The paper will discuss the context of later-life learning in Europe, analyse ForAge’s goals, consider what it had achieved and raise the question of how the ForAge network might go forward in the future.
Abstract

This paper will consider the ForAge Project from the point of view of the Association for Education and Ageing (AEA), which was a participant in the Project. The paper will focus on the development of the ForAge database of knowledge, data, information and debate on later-life learning in Europe on which the AEA took the lead. AEA continues to develop and maintain the database although the period of Project EU funding has ended. The paper will also outline the continuing activities of ForAge, of which the present Conference (sponsored by AEA) is one. It will explain how the format and content of the Conference - bringing together a wide range of papers, presentations, workshops and discussions - can feed into the ongoing activities of the Forage network.

Paper: Learning in Later Life: the view from the ForAge Project 2012- 2015

The ForAge Project: Forage for Later-life Learning: Building on European Experience’ was funded by the European Union Grundtvig Programme as a multi-lateral network for the period, January 2012 – March 2015. There were 16 network partners from 14 countries. Leicester University was the lead partner and the Association for Education and Ageing (AEA) played a prominent partner role in the Project’s activities.

ForAge’s formal goals, as expressed in the Proposal document were

- To develop a European multi-lateral network concerned with learning in later life
  This was the enabling goal: it was the framework through which the other goals would be achieved.

- To promote the development of learning in later-life, the exchange of good practice and the raising of standards throughout Europe
  This was the overall key goal and an ambitious goal indeed

- To be an archive and access point for information
  This goal implied a major task of collecting and organising information and knowledge about later-life learning into a database

- To promote informed discussion between practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and older people
  One of the ways to do promote these discussions was use of the database and the information and knowledge to which it gave access
The ForAge partners from the beginning agreed that this was not just a three year project that did interesting things and then ceased. At their very first meeting they talked about sustainability, about the means through which the aims and activities of the Project could be sustainable and continue usefully after the funding from the EU ended.

We are now exactly 12 months after the end of project funding and nine months since the submission of the final Project report. Partners have mainly been undertaking dissemination meetings and conferences in their own countries but remain in contact an international network. The four goals of the Project remain current. AEA is one of the partners which has undertaken to keep the goals of ForAge moving forward - indeed not just remaining in existence but continuing to develop.

It will now be useful to refer briefly and specifically to the role of AEA in the ForAge Project and to explore how that is connected to the present Conference.

Some of you know how the dynamics of projects work and how responsibilities are shared out. At an early point in ForAge discussions, colleagues from AEA began to raise questions about how the goal of being an archive and access point for information would actually be realised. What in fact would it look like? Within six months AEA found itself with the major responsibility for conceptualising and bringing into existence the ForAge European database of information on later-life learning which would be one of the main outcomes of the Project. If we then roll forward 3.5 years to the present, I can tell you that the ForAge database of information on learning in later life now sits proudly on-line on the ForAge website and is openly and freely available for use. It continues to develop and AEA retains the major responsibility for developing it. The web address is http://foragenetwork.eu/

In terms of promoting informed discussion between practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and older people, one of the other formal goals of the ForAge Project, the partners ran a series of international conferences from 2012 – 2014, held in different countries, focussing not on the Project but on themes and issues relevant to the Project and helping it to identify issues in later-life learning that needed to be prioritised. Towards the end of the Project, Forage partners agreed that they would undertake to continue, from time to time, this series of international conferences after the end of the Project. The planning of the present conference on the main campus of the British Open University, in fact, began as AEA’s contribution to that joint undertaking. You have probably noticed that we advertised this conference as “in association with the ForAge network”. The shape and format of the conference follow that established during earlier ForAge conferences.

This means that the conference does not just end after its last session so that, after you disperse, it is simply forgotten or, at best, a pleasant memory. The intention is that the ideas coming out of this conference will feed into the Forage network. They will be reported to the ForAge partners; they will be placed on the Forage website; those of you who provide us with written papers will find them referenced in the ForAge database; the round-up final session of this conference on Thursday (it is described on the conference programme as Conference Reflections) will be analysed and the key outcomes used as the basis of a debate on the Forage Forum facility which is located on the ForAge
website. You will be invited to join in the debate. Thus, by being here you are making a contribution to the ForAge network.

II

At this point it will be useful to return to the ForAge database of European “knowledge” of later-life learning, which has about 900 items in it at present, to show how it evolved to its present state. Of course, when we started to think about the ForAge database we looked around at the databases and database approaches already existing in the later-life and lifelong learning fields and in adjacent fields such as those of adult education and of the care and health of older people. They had different definitions of later-life and later-life learning, different purposes, different target audiences and different structures and more. We had to decide agree our definitions and approaches to all of those aspects.

One of our most important decisions was to decide whether the ForAge database on later-life learning should mainly include only academic and research-based papers and books drawn from across Europe or include also “information, comment, opinion, discussion, recommendations and ‘voices’ of older people”. Given the wide aims of the ForAge Project we chose the latter. That decision was very important. It put a priority on the database structure and categories and on the classification of material. We had to distinguish and not confuse all those different kinds of materials.

The seven current headline categories of the database changed and evolved during the lifetime of the Project and, even now, they have not necessarily reached their final form. They continue to develop more and more sub-categories. They include four original areas identified in the original ForAge proposal – Policy, Research, Projects and Theory and Practice - and three more - Commentaries and Voices, Opinion and News, and Knowledge Sources. These three attempt to provide a home for the variety of other types of material which are important to the ForAge project.

We had to make a number of key decisions about the database and come to conclusions on key questions. For example, a major question was what material would be included and where would it come from? Given that the Project was based on a partnership and network, the main conclusion was that material would be submitted or suggested by all the partners in the 14 countries. In the event, this happened in part but often AEA personnel had to be ready to fill obvious gaps in the database even of foreign language material. Other examples of key decisions about the database included the procedures we had to develop for classification of material and allocation to categories, for writing of abstracts (so that a user could decide whether to view the material or not) and for maintaining a quality thresh-hold for material included. As the database developed we realised that its search engine needed to be made more sophisticated and that we needed to provide links to material or make material downloadable. But there were technical issues to be resolved. Language was a crucial issue. Although English was the language used in the ForAge project, it was agreed that non-English language material should be included in what was intended to be a European database. Indeed, there would obviously be untranslated material of value in the other European languages. We had no resources to translate material but we decided to ensure that at least an abstract in both the original language and in English would be included wherever possible.
It may be of value to conclude by asking ourselves if the database, so far, has led us to any thoughts or conclusions about the available knowledge we currently have of later life learning. What, indeed, is the view of later life learning visible from the ForAge database? Three questions occur (no doubt, among many others) as we consider about the current contents of the database.

1. **Is there a large volume of successful research available on later-life learning in Europe?**

   It seems to us that there is an abundance of statements of strong and intense advocacy, opinion and concern about the importance of later-life learning and its connection to well-being, health and fulfilment and these are cross European phenomena. But our impression is that there is not a parallel significant volume of successful research or research programmes (whether empirical or not) when you compare this field to other fields of education or social research.

2. **Does the database suggest that later-life learning is a first order issue in Europe?**

   It seems to us to suggest the opposite. In connection with older people, first order issues include health, social inclusion, housing, access to services, security, poverty, physical and mental ageing, wellbeing and others, but not learning. Later-life learning is not usually defined intrinsically in this field but by connections proposed between it and one or more of the first-order issues. Thus learning may be perceived as good for health, for well-being, for social contact etc, but not for its own sake and such research as there is based on those connections. It may be that we practitioners encourage and collaborate in this state of affairs and that we ought to be talking more of learning as a good in itself and as a right of each member of society, whatever his or her age rather than as a means to some other end.

3. **Does the database raise any questions about what is “knowledge” about later-life learning?**

   Yes, it seems to. Many of the people in this field who are academics and researchers disregard as knowledge anything which is not “proper” research, scientifically validated (however that is defined in the discipline in question) even though such research may have limited objectives and conclusions which do not go beyond the provisional or, indeed, the obvious. If, in the field of later life learning, we want to increase provision and opportunities, demonstrate to older people the value of learning and persuade politicians and policy makers, it could be argued that we should give at least as much attention to wisdom based on good practice, successful experience and rigorously debated opinion. The ForAge database has made me rather more humble about this. Some research, published by distinguished researchers, takes us nowhere and does not stimulate thought or influence practice. Some essays, conjured out of the air by thoughtful people, without any pretence of supporting evidence, can fire the imagination and bring forth a swarm of research hypotheses. A list of real-life quotes from older learners (even if taken out of context) – these days called “Voices” - can sometimes stimulate a leap of understanding which days of reading research papers and secondary sources fail to stimulate.
PRESENTERS IN PARALLEL SESSIONS

Carol Allen
New Horizons Activity Centre for Over 50s, Guinness Trust, London, UK

Drama with older learners: challenge, experience, outcomes

Abstract

Scope The presentation will be a critical overview and reflection upon a drama class for over 50s which the presenter has taught since 2009. The presentation will be supported by two short videos and a selection of photographs.

Class Profile The presentation will consider the characteristics and background of the older learners. Many had not participated in drama before.

The Aims and Curriculum of the class will be examined. The plays chosen were usually challenging and included, for example, Shakespearian texts. Discussion of texts and use of English (some learners were not first language English speakers) were included. Social issues arose out of the texts and became part of the curriculum. In practical work, there was emphasis on voice production, particularly breathing and posture, and teamwork.

Group creative achievements A range of actual productions were taken from initial rehearsals to full theatre performance. One production was a site specific historical piece performed at Kensington Palace. Another was a theatre piece on older people living in isolation performed at a conference and in other settings. There have been collaborations with several external agencies and theatres.

Individual creative achievements Learners have authored their own works (one had a play produced outside the class) and variously have: been in a BBC documentary on exercise and older people; taken part in a Silver Comedy stand up workshop; taken a role in an outside production.

Educational benefits Educational benefits for older learners will be considered. It will be argued that in such classes older learners acquire new intellectual interests and improve critical, psycho-motor and acting skills.

Social and health benefits The presentation will evidence a range of social and health benefits for older people that arise from such drama classes including increased confidence leading to part time employment; formation of new friendships; social confidence; confidence in self; self-awareness; posture; support in coping with personal health issues and life changes.

Demonstration of technique There will be a demonstration of techniques used in the classes, e.g. breathing, relaxation and memory training.

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Paper: Drama with older learners: challenge, experience, outcomes

Introduction

This is not academic piece; there are no scientific results and no data reported statistically. These are observations “from the coal face” of teaching people in later life. They are about work which I have been doing with the New Horizons/Open Age Activity Centre drama group in London since 2009.

I was trained as a drama teacher and acted and directed in my youth, became a journalist and started doing some teaching again in the 1990s – media training for the Trades Union Congress and assertiveness training for the Greater London Pensioners’ Group. Then I became involved with the New Horizons Activity Centre.

Class Profile: the characteristics and background of the older learners.

Many of my older learners had not participated in drama before or not since school. Among them have been a couple of former professional actors. One is still with me and the other, sadly, died a few years ago. The older learners are mostly over 60 years with one in her 50s. The current class is eight older learners (6 women, 2 men - but the second man joined recently). Numbers of learners go up and down between classes. Students move on to other interests (e.g. Sylvie to singing or Jane to employment). The oldest student, Ray, is now 94 years old and has mobility, seeing and hearing challenges. She has been an amateur actress all her life. Jo is an 80 year old former professional actor, very fit and an exponent of pilates. One man in his late 60s has major health issues. The older learners are mainly white Caucasian. One Estonian student has good basic English but needs support with pronunciation, delivery and some comprehension – one reason why she joined the class.

The stated reasons of the others for attending have often been expressed as ‘ just wanting to find out more about drama’. Some speak of hoping to make new friends and all (particularly the 94 year old) want to perform in front of an audience. Individual challenges and goals emerge as we work together (e.g. memory improvement, physical coordination and posture).

Aims and Curriculum of the class

In the first half hour of each class learners do a physical and vocal warm up – tuning up the actors’ instruments - stretching, breathing and posture exercises, diction including tongue- twisters. Doing this clearly has health benefits.

The main part of the class is concerned with whatever texts and techniques we are working on at that time. We use scenes, monologues, poems and improvisations and other exercises to get at the meaning beneath a text and build the character.

We include scenes and monologues from existing plays – we have done a lot of Shakespeare and Dickens. We include extracts from contemporary plays e.g. Abi Morgan’s Love Song. Sometimes plays are developed through improvisation or written by me or one of the students (as was the case in a play, Miss Threadgold, which we developed, performed and, later, on which a film was based).

All of this includes much discussion and analysis. For example, with Shakespeare, what does the text actually mean in contemporary English (bearing in mind that not all students are first language
English speakers)? What does Mark Antony mean when he says “Friends Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears”. Why does he say it? What is he thinking? What is his objective, why is there increasing and obvious irony throughout the speech? How is the interaction with the crowd, his audience, to be handled?

Social issues arise out of the texts and become part of the curriculum. In a later play which we constructed about the Hanoverian monarchs at Kensington Palace (The Glorious Georges), Audrey, a learner who is black, played a former slave who was one of George I’s closest aides. This led to a useful discussion about the history of black people in the United Kingdom.

**Group creative achievements**

For the first couple of years, members of the class performed to other learners at the centre scenes from plays, poems and rehearsed improvisations in rehearsal conditions in the main activity room. Then we moved to putting together scenes and plays which we eventually performed in different contexts in front of audiences from outside the centre. The decision to make a film based on a play we had performed (Miss Threadgold, which has already been mentioned) was a marvellous challenge. Rehearsal in class and rehearsal and actual filming outside class with a volunteer crew of younger people made it a truly intergenerational experience. It is illustrated here in a short video made by an online news channel


After that I went on to make a second film about the back story – the events in the earlier life of Miss Threadgold which led to the story-line of the original play. Two young actors were the leads alongside some of the original older actors. But this was not a class project.

Where there is funding for such adult education, funders are interested in tangible goals achieved and other benefits such as health, non-first language English students improving language skills, promotion of diversity etc. My drama students are most interested in intrinsic goals connected to performance, both in the classroom, and particularly to an audience. For this experience, my older learners are very willing to put in extra effort and to do extra rehearsal outside the classroom.

The best example is our **Isolation** project – a short play, based on improvisations on the problem of older people being isolated. It has, over the years, become our travelling show. We were originally invited to develop it for a conference on Isolation and Older People and have done it since at about half a dozen conferences and other events and venues and as part of our first full theatre programme in December 2012. Slot in, slot out – each older learner creates a character of a person who is older and isolated. As students leave the class, new ones arrive, create their character and they can be slotted in.

**Link:** [http://catswhiskersfilms.co.uk/?page_id=37](http://catswhiskersfilms.co.uk/?page_id=37)

The theatre programme was entitled **Age Cannot Wither**. It was performed in a pub theatre with full lighting and sound and as much costume as we could manage on no money. Further opportunities for the older learners to gain experience outside the class mushroomed. I then directed at the
Tristan Bates Theatre in Covent Garden a showcase production of a play I co-wrote with one of the students originally for the pub theatre show in which Jo, our former professional actress reprised her role and the other roles were taken by current professionals. As a result of this Jo was invited to take a role in a professional showcase of new writing at Southwark theatre. Last year, most of the learners auditioned for an Old Vic Community Theatre project. One student was cast, another was recruited to the choir and another worked backstage.

Two years ago we took part in a Victoria and Albert Museum video project about the Masque culture of 18th century Venice. The older learners attended workshops and two days filming in a studio against a ‘green screen’ (a special effects video-streamed background). They learned about the history of the masque, what actors go through, period dance and ‘green screen’. It would prove very useful for our next big project.

This project, in 2015, was The Glorious Georges at Kensington Palace. It started when a group of tutors were invited by the Kensington Palace Learning and Engagement team to a seminar in connection with the Glorious Georges project which they were running at the time promoting the historic rooms in the palace created during the reigns of the first Hanoverian kings, George I and George II. The object was to encourage us to do our own projects with our students at the Palace – perhaps art, perhaps writing and in my case drama. This struck me as a great opportunity for the drama group to mount our first “site specific” show – telling a story where it actually happened.

I developed a script dramatising the historical stories told in the Palace about the first two Georges. There was the story of Mehemet, for example, a former Muslim black slave who became George I’s closest confidant; the composer Handel, who was a great favourite at court and was music tutor to George II and Queen Caroline’s children; and Peter ‘the Wild Boy’, found living feral in the forests of Hanover and adopted by George I as a ‘pet’. The script included back references to Queen Anne and Charles 1 (including enactment of the latter’s execution). For the first time the students worked in a ‘thrust’ form of staging which meant they were be surrounded by the audience and therefore had to be constantly on the move, keeping the action fluid and inclusive. They brought history to life in many cases through very short scenes and had to interact this time not only with their fellow actors but with the audience too.

It went well. In August surroundings with minimal props and most of the actors playing multiple roles, the production fairly romped along. The cast enjoyed themselves, including the performance of a stately dance and they showed the benefits of being well-rehearsed. We reprised the play with some other pieces at a nursing home in the autumn

Link - video – Glorious Georges at Kensington Palace: http://ynuk.tv/2015/06/12/glorious-georges-kensington-palace/

Educational, Social and Health benefits

I strongly believe that there are significant benefits for older people from participating in drama classes. I cannot prove or quantify this in a way satisfactory to scientists but I believe that the anecdotal evidence is compelling. There is space here only to list some headings and examples.

Acting skills The development of acting skills has been illustrated throughout the paper. The benefits of acting (including work on mime, music and movement on which we are currently engaged)
evidently promote co-ordination of mind and body and also spatial awareness. One older learner, commenting on her experience of acting in “the Glorious Georges” observed that “for the first time I found it easy to know where I was supposed to be for my line”.

Learning about English culture and heritage

Many students report that because of our discussions and readings in class they are more critically aware of content in the films, theatre and television which they watch independently. The Estonian student’s confidence in her use of English has grown in the two terms she has been with us.

Improving memory

My older learners claim that memory is an ever-present challenge both in everyday life and especially in my classes. But we work on it. For example, last term we devoted a great deal of time to group learning of the poem by WH Auden, “The Night Mail”, both as a memory exercise and for use in a future choral speaking presentation. Having a performance goal in mind is always a helpful incentive to memorising. The problem with memory for these older learners lies partly in the beliefs about, and lack of confidence in, their memories. In this respect the class often helps them greatly. They gain confidence in their abilities to remember lines, to perform them and to do so appropriately in front of other people. The resultant increase in confidence can lead to the older learners improving their lives, even gaining employment - one student with a history of depression and another with confidence issues are both now in part-time work.

Health

The older male student who is attempting to cope with diabetes, ongoing cancer treatment and mobility issues says that he feels much better when he makes the effort to come to class. He reports that his consultant said that the classes are helping him. Our 94 year actress is determined to keep up with performing despite her range of physical challenges because it means so much to her. The posture of a lady in her mid-seventies was really bad when she joined the class but has now improved. Jo, aged 80, comes with me to professional actors’ workshops and hopes to return to work by doing a little modelling.

Several students have received support from friends in class and in the Centre in coping with challenging personal issues in terms of relationships and financial challenges.

New friendships

New friendships have formed both inside and outside the class. Our outside rehearsals and research events (such as viewing films related to plays we are planning to perform) are usually followed by social interaction over a meal and a drink. The older learners learn to co-operate together as a group of friends, a team, and to tolerate each other’s foibles. They cover and stand in for one another – for example, a student missed her cue in a performance because she was finding a chair offstage for the 94 year old but the show went on and another student covered for her.

End note

In my experience, drama for older students (whatever their background) has multiple intrinsic and extrinsic benefits and – perhaps most importantly – is enormous fun for all.
Abstract

Without the hippocampus, that little seahorse-shaped organ, deep in the brain, your experience of the day’s events would be consigned to oblivion with no hope of recall. An amazing discovery of neuroscience is that the hippocampus can be increased in size by lifestyle activities that lower the risk of dementia symptoms. Walking briskly, a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, keeping weight under control, undertaking stress-reduction practices such as mindfulness or yoga, and staying connected to other people, all influence the hippocampus. Also, so important for older adults, is staying eager to learn new things and sharing ideas. Together these activities make for a livelier body and mind, and raise the odds that you will have a healthy brain with little hippocampus damage and a lower risk of memory loss as the years roll by. The growing body of solid scientific evidence should spur us on to take the necessary measures to keep our hippocampus in great shape and the paper will outline and discuss that evidence.

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Hilary Farnworth with Teresa Lefort  
Ransackers Association, UK

Older students’ perspectives on life-long learning: reflections from the Ransackers educational adventure

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

The Ransackers Association (RA) was set up in 2006 with support from the UK Better Government for Older People programme. It was established to support older students without academic qualifications who took part in a scheme offering ten-week residential courses at a small number of UK further education colleges. Over 700 students participated between 2004 and 2014, and many completed written dissertations. Recent policy changes and the withdrawal of public funding mean that the courses are no longer in operation and the RA continues to operate as an unstaffed, user-led body promoting the re-continuation of the courses, student fellowship, and the right to enjoy lifelong learning.

This paper reports progress on a small unfunded study drawing on the written work of RA members and former members, plus aspects of a new 2016-17 research project funded by the Averil Osborne Fund, which not only explores benefits of serious study to the older learners but also their subsequent contribution to society as active senior citizens. Dissertation topics held at Ruskin College were listed under broad categories to characterise the main themes. Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with former RA students and tutors. These archived documents and retrospective accounts provide insights for the understanding of life-long learning and creativity from older students’ perspectives.

In 2016 a research team comprising six ‘older researchers’ supported by academically trained researchers will carry out a 12 months project, on “Serious study in later life: what are the implications for quality of life, personal wellbeing, and effective citizenship?”

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Jennifer Granville and Teresa Brayshaw
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Senior Moments: Reflections on the CINAGE project and collaborative advances

Abstract

This presentation provides a sharing of the thinking, practice and outcomes which has resulted from the creation of CINAGE – a Grundtvig multilateral project with interlinked activities resulting in the production of a learning package aimed at empowering older people towards achieving active ageing. The presentation will trace the development of the CINAGE project through its various phases that addressed the six competencies identified by the European Commission as essential to active ageing. We will identify key examples of how piloting this course with a group of senior volunteers eventuated finally in practical filmmaking.

We shall share the story of how screenwriting, directing and editing workshops, enabled the participants to write and produce their own scripts, which were based on autobiographical stories and strategies for coping with ageing.

The project culminated in a Film Festival and symposium that invited short film entries that either featured older protagonists, or had older filmmakers as part of the creative team and/or crew. This Festival was largely co-ordinated and run by the CINAGE volunteers, with great continuing support from Leeds City Council, which indicated its interest in working with Leeds Beckett to further sustainability and development.

Now we have begun the CINAGE 2016 Course – as part of the widening participation remit of the School and Faculty and are developing strategies to capitalise upon the creative talent and experience of the participants. The new course is a great opportunity to use what we learned from the pilot project and incorporate a whole new level of experience – whilst jettisoning some of the less successful elements of the pilot.

The presentation will share with conference participants some of the performance strategies we have been employing with the new participants in order to create appropriate learning environments to enable collaboration, connectivity and creative engagement and share ways of moving forwards.

Website: http://www.cinageproject.eu/en/

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Dear Teresa,

About 18 months ago, I started to walk the Leeds/Liverpool canal with an elderly friend. We are doing it in 5 mile stretches and plan fairly carefully as our starting points get further and further away from Leeds. We have to know what trains, buses, taxis we will get to each starting point, and from there back again and then we have to make sure we have snacks and drinks (my friend is diabetic) – and, of course, most importantly we have our maps, both Ordnance Survey and the specialist Leeds/Liverpool Canal map.

Jenny

Dear Jenny,

Some years ago – as a younger lecturer, I found myself at a Performance Research Conference called ‘Here Be Dragons’ – which of course refers to a popular belief that medieval maps used this legendary phrase and images of beasts as a way of pointing towards undiscovered territory. At this conference a cartographer said something that has stayed with me ‘maps lie and that’s why people get lost’. We all feel safer when we know where we’re going but creative processes also requires us to let ourselves get lost, to force ourselves into leaving the safety of the map behind so that we can surprise ourselves with what we find.

Teresa

Dear Teresa,

We meticulously plan – and yet, every time we walk we are taken by surprise – by an unexpected landscape, the quirky individuality of a garden or by the sadness of an industrial world lost. My friend and I talk and bare our souls, and learn intimate facts about one and other that, if we hadn’t embarked on this particular journey, we would never have known, and our lives are the richer for it. In writing this letter to you about the CINAGE project, I find myself comparing my canal endeavour, to the lessons I have learnt – and am still learning from the CINAGE project.

Jenny

Dear Jenny

On Facebook this morning I read an article, posted by a friend, which told the story of a Finnish mother asking her primary age daughter what she had done that day for her ‘physical education’ lesson. Her answer was this – ‘they sent us to the woods with a compass and a map and we were told to find our way home.’ Taking back the meaning of being lost, in creative practice and Higher Education, seems almost a political act, a matter of existential agency that we ought to reclaim in order to feel at home in ourselves. Rebecca Solnit writes: ‘there’s another art of being at home in
the unknown, so that being in its midst isn’t cause for panic or suffering, of being at home with being lost.’

Teresa

Dear Teresa,

The formal name for the project is ‘CINAGE – Cinema for Active Ageing’, but those of us running it used the shorthand of ‘teaching filmmaking to old people’! The goals were to find ways to get older people to learn. To really learn. To make the brain work hard, as that is how we age well, by grappling with technology and solving problems and learning new languages – such as the language of film. The actual outcome of this project was a series of short films but the real learning was in facing up to the realities of ageing as a felt experience.

Jenny

Dear Jenny,

When I face up to the realities of aging I still think about it as a process of getting lost. I’m now, at the age of 50, well aware that I’m mid career. I’m a mid career theatre artist – a mid career academic. I’m mid – I’m in the middle – at the centre – in a position of centrality – at the core. From this position of centrality – I look towards the edges – to the margins. I remember a time when I existed more on the edges than in the middle... And you Jenny – you are a decade further on from me and you are finding new spaces in which to operate and practise and learn – new projects to get lost in.

Teresa

Dear Teresa,

As part of the project I was given the most privileged opportunities, to not only visit our partner countries – Slovenia, Portugal and Italy – but to meet their volunteers, from those that had been forced to retire at 55 in Slovenia, and were now considered ‘old’, to the 85 year old ex-revolutionary sculptor in Portugal. All those I met were moved and excited to have been invited to be part of this pilot project, to reflect, to tell their stories and, most of all, to share their experiences of ageing through making their own films of their own stories. And the experience has been just as moving and exciting for those of us delivering the project. Or, as you would say, ‘getting lost in the project’.

Jenny

Dear Jenny,

I think then the question then about ageing is also a question about how to get lost.

Senior moments:
“Never to get lost is not to live, not to know how to get lost brings you to destruction, and somewhere in the terra incognita in between lies a life of discovery”.

In her book ‘A Field Guide to Getting Lost’ Rebecca Solnit explores the territory of losing something we care about, losing ourselves, losing control. Losing anything is about the familiar falling away,
getting lost is about the unfamiliar appearing. Either way, there is a loss of control which seems, from where I am positioned, in my middle age, to be significant in this discussion.

Teresa

Dear Teresa,

Early on in the CINAGE pilot group – the biggest complaint all the participants voiced was that they didn’t want to talk about being old, or losing anything, or ‘senior moments’. They wanted to get on with their lives and learn about filmmaking and all that it entailed. They didn’t want to make films about being old. And our job was to find a way for them to explore their own aging, as a field of creative possibilities, rather than as an experience of deficiency and loss.

Jenny

Dear Jenny,

I’ve been thinking a lot about the challenge you presented me with to run a one day workshop with your second group of CINAGE students whom you felt needed the opportunity to work together and undertake creative exercises and play, in preparation for the collaborative process of filmmaking. If I’m honest, I was a bit apprehensive about bringing a group of 25 students who had signed up for a film making course into the theatre studio for a day of practical work.

I decided to begin the day teaching everybody a relatively easy ‘social line dance’ called ‘The Slash’ – which I hoped would enable each individual to move in time and space to music and feel very quickly like an ensemble. As Samuel Beckett says, ‘if all else fails – dance’.

I worked in exactly the same way as I work with undergraduate, MA and PhD students – with a series of proposals and exercises which I know, from experience, will develop creative encounters encouraging risk taking, problem solving, personal discovery, failure, flexibility and fun.

I was surprised by the openness of the group to try things out – to have a go – to generally be up for it – without the usual anxiety around meaning and end-gaming that is now so prevalent throughout undergraduate educational contexts. Of course the levels of experience and expertise in the group were tremendous but, nevertheless, I was particularly impressed by the quality of engagement in the proposal made:

“If you were to write a letter to your 16 year old self, what would you say?”

which directly addressed the questions of ‘where am I now?’, ‘where am I going?’, ‘where have I been?’.

I want to remind you of some of the really moving messages the group sent to their younger selves.

Teresa

“Dear Terry,

It must be barely credible to you that I’m writing from 2016 – science fiction to you in the heady days of 1967! Contrary to what you think, you will last, so start thinking about looking after yourself, and lose that romantic
death wish – it’s simply not better to burn out than to fade away, despite that rush of blood to the head that suggests otherwise right now. It’s just quicker.

Don’t be so eager for extremes of experience, particularly the drugs everyone’s talking about – there are vivid experiences every moment if you know how to look.

Your family and heritage are valuable, those generations of miners and railway workers, though they seem like a millstone now, especially your delinquent, jailbird brother. You can learn from his fearlessness. One day it will be a source of pride to you that you came from Seacroft Council Estate, where you wrote Bob Dylan quotes on the wall.

You already love life, learn to love yourself, you’re included in it.

From your loving self in 2016,

Terry”

“Dear JZ,

Since the age of twelve, you’ve wanted to be sixteen. So here you are, you’re sixteen. I know you are thrilled at being almost grown up, like your big brother’s girlfriends you so much admire. I also know that somewhere inside you, there’s a small voice that says: ‘You’re not there yet, you’ll never be, you’ll never look as splendid as these girls, confident in their perky bras, and bright Brigitte Bardot skirts.’ Listen to me: use this day, your birthday to put aside a few things that get in your way and prevent you from truly enjoying being you.

Stop thinking that you are not pretty enough, that you are too thin, that you’ve hardly got any bust, that you’re not attractive to boys. Do you realise how gorgeous you are? So don’t wait, JZ. Now is your time. Make a move. Be bold. Sure, there will be ups and downs coming later. For just now, enjoy being 16.

Love yourself, be yourself. I love you.

JZ XX “

“Dear Mary,

Do not worry about being expelled from school. What do the nuns know anyway !

Put all that behind you. Full stop . End of that story.

Look on it as an escape from a place that made you very unhappy, where you never fitted in. Here you are at the start of a new life, a new beginning and a chance to be who you want to be. Take a while to plan your brilliant future and then . . . . Go for it !

And don’t look back.

Lots of love

Yourself”

And here is a moving letter I received on the evening of the workshop...

“Dear Teresa,

Thank-you for your lovely exercises especially our letter to 16 year old selves. I didn’t read a sentence from my letter because it was too sad and everyone else had provided such positive advice. I didn’t want the session to
end on a sad note. My mother died when I was 14 leaving me and my two sisters in the care of our father who was an extremely dictatorial and bullying man, hurt by experiences in WWII and his own early life. I was advising my young self to try to understand why my father was just so hard on us, but also to follow my interests and put myself first. At the time I felt I couldn’t because I felt I had to contribute financially to the home. Also, my father was of the view that we had to put ourselves last. Wrong of my father to impose that burden onto me. This exercise has brought it home to me why I am like I am - a rebel.

Thank you, Teresa, for this enlightenment.

Thank you.”

Dear Teresa,

I can honestly say that the CINAGE project is the project that goes on giving. The project culminated last year in a Film Festival and small Symposium where we invited other people working on similar initiatives to come to Leeds and discuss their experiences with us and our partners and the volunteers who had been part of the CINAGE project from all four countries. This was a brilliant event – our volunteers took the lead in organising events for the volunteers from our partners which included a Silver Screen tour of Leeds (led by 82 year old Sian Batchelder who does the tour for Leeds Civic Society) showing all the buildings that used to be cinemas, a visit to Saltaire – as well as the symposium where we met the organisers of the Silver Screen Festival in Frankfurt and Generation to Generation here in the UK – both of whom we have now developed partnerships with. The Film Festival invited films that featured, were made by or were about age and ageing and we are now growing the festival and have signed a partnership agreement with Leeds International Film Festival.

CINAGE Film Festival is going to be an annual event with the next one being held on Older People’s Day in October in partnership with Bradford City of Film which is running an Older People’s Film Festival in association with UNESCO.

To feed these festivals we need new films, and we are currently running two projects – which I consider the true glory of the pilot project. CINAGE 2016, has 21 participants over the age of 65 – and they are the people that took part in your brilliant live, creative development day. They are learning how to develop and make films – screenwriting, directing, editing and filmmaking, and along the way are developing all the other skills we pride ourselves on giving to our undergraduates – project management, communication, creativity, technology, problem solving….and they are having fun and they are telling their stories, remembering their lives, finding metaphors for living.

They are all there for different reasons – one is a retired 86 year old actor, producer and director, who wanted to see how it ‘is done now’, another a 65 year old librarian, about to retire and terrified, wanted to meet people as her whole life has been her career and she has no clue how to enter ‘old age’.

Both of these have benefited from the wonderful world of collaboration and self-reflection and learning something new that has allowed them to be honest, and scared and discover parts of themselves they never knew they had. Next weekend we are going to read all 21 scripts that they have been developing with their individual tutors and choose the ones for production.

Jenny
Dear CINAGE Students,

I thought it most appropriate to write you a letter to share some reflections about our day together. It’s now around 10pm Saturday evening and I’m back in Manchester, thinking about how much territory we covered in today’s workshop. The activities of reflecting, remembering, reading, listening, witnessing, drawing, writing, conversing, moving, composing material etc are all connected with the act of creation which is essential for film making and art making.

For me there were a number of new creative projects that I was able to get a glimpse of whilst we worked today and I hope you were able to seed some of your own. In my work, I am very accustomed to material and ideas emerging from live encounters which involve people moving in time and space, as opposed to sitting and writing a script or imagining a solution. I suppose I am trained in, and trust, the opportunities that present themselves when improvising – which is in truth the art of ‘making it up as you go along’. This practice of being in a place of uncertainty is also a constant reminder that ‘not knowing’ and ‘being lost’ are parts of any creative process and I welcome both with open arms.

‘If we knew what we were doing it wouldn’t be called research would it?’ – Albert Einstein

That said it is also worth dwelling on what we do know and what we have found.

I know that the ‘letters to your 16 year-old selves’ are a really interesting way of accessing an approach to autobiographical writing, which connects individuals to previous, and future versions of themselves and others (in other words fictional characters).

I know that when these texts are shared, exchanged and ‘bartered’ with; written over and written through, and offered up to the collective writing process that often happens in film creation with the same generosity and investment that was evident in the session today, that there is the potential for some new and meaningful collective outputs.

I also know that outcomes are only part of any learning and growing process, and that the experiences of being in the moment, of getting into flow, of playing around and of putting oneself in the environment where novelty and discovery abound, enables us to connect to different versions of our present self. A present self that is flexible, open to changing direction and persuasion and position (physically, intellectually, emotionally, perceptually) and also a self that finds pleasure in an embodied understanding of the differences between a ‘human doing’ and a ‘human being’.

Those spaces, wherever we find them, that enable us to connect with ourselves and others in ways that take us (for a short while) away from our habits offer the potential for us to develop new movements (neurological pathways) in our brain, in our physiology, in our experiences, in our memories and also in our imaginations.

Teresa

Dear Teresa,

I have had to find ways to deliver material to students who are hungry to learn but terrified about whether they can tackle something so seemingly difficult and outside of their experience. This part
has been my major learning curve. In fact, of course, they have so much to offer in comparison to
the usual undergraduate, richness of experience, humility, excitement and no sense of
entitlement...as a result I have become a passionate advocate of making the university a space that
is available and accessible to older people. The students who have worked on the film crews making
the older peoples’ films have told me that this has been the best experience of their time at film
school – they have enjoyed working with the older people. They were given respect for what they
knew, loved being able to teach and lead, and learned to respect these old people who turned up at
6:00 in the morning and worked full days to 10 at night with energy and commitment and good
humour to make their films. All those involved last year are clamouring to work on this year’s films.

We are now working to get the University to commit to being an Age Friendly University and are
looking at ways to develop similar programmes in other areas- such as your performance. For
myself, how can I begin to describe how important this has been. I have learned that I have to plan
to age well and that starts now. That I need to value my experience, what I have to offer and what I
have to learn from my peers, my elders and the young people I teach and learn from. It has restored
my joy of teaching.

To work without assessment, with no agenda or learning outcomes other than to pass knowledge
on, to share expertise, to give opportunity for self -expression and to find new ideas to develop...my
own practice has become more reflective and I feel as though I have found a rich seam that can be
mined for many years to come ....certainly for as many years as I have left!

Jenny

Dear CINAGE students and Jenny,

I conclude with a short piece from Anne Bogarte entitled ‘resistance’ and it offers, I think, some
brilliant advice for all of us...

“Your attitude towards resistance determines the success of your work and your future. Resistance
should be cultivated.

How you meet these obstacles that present themselves in the light of any endeavour determine the
direction of your life and career.

Allow me to propose a few suggestions about how to handle the natural resistances that your
circumstances might offer.

Do not assume that you have to have some prescribed conditions to do your best work.

Do not wait.

Do not wait for enough time or money to accomplish what you think you have in mind.

Work with what you have right now.

Work with the people around you right now.

Work with the architecture you see around you right now.
Do not wait for what you assume is the appropriate, stress-free environment in which to generate expression.

Do not wait for maturity or insight or wisdom.

Do not wait till you are sure that you know what you are doing.

Do not wait until you have enough technique.

What you do now, what you make of your present circumstances will determine the quality and scope of your future endeavours.

And at the same time, be patient.”

With all good wishes as we go forward to get lost in the future,

Teresa
Dr Caroline Holland with Professor Shailey Minocha and Dr Duncan Banks, The Open University, UK

Later life learning: wearable technologies for health

Abstract

This paper discusses older people’s use of devices to monitor their activity and health. The global wearables market is expected to reach a value of 19 billion U.S. dollars in 2018, more than ten times its value in 2013. One forecast (CSS Insights) predicts that by 2018, 87% of the 135 million wearables shipped by then will comprise wrist-worn devices, with quantified self devices to track fitness and health being the fastest-growing category. It is expected that often these will be marketed as gifts, and in spite of the current emphasis on youth and fitness, already they are being purchased for older relatives, in addition to numbers of people aged over 55 buying their own devices as part of their health and fitness maintenance.

While there is an extensive literature on the how older people respond to ICTs, and computers in particular, with an emphasis on age-related barriers to learning and use, there has been much less work to date on how older people learn to use wearables, make sense of the data they provide, and manage the data online for certain products. This paper considers a partnership approach to investigating whether and how these devices can acceptably contribute toward self-monitoring of activity and health by people aged over 55, and the kinds of learning involved in getting to grips with them and understanding the data generated.

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Conversation into Action: Can later life learning enhance citizenship, participation and democracy?

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

This workshop will explore whether involvement in structured learning events has the potential to engage older learners more fully as participating citizens.

Adult learning has suffered severe funding cut backs over the last 10 years or more and these cuts have, to an extent being justified by the low priority increasingly given to any form of education or training that is not work-related. There have been suggestions that much of the demand for lifelong learning among older learners has been met by the Universities of the Third Age whose numbers continue to grow. However, both the perception of later life learning and the responses to it from U3A’s highlight that the main focus is often on the individual benefits that result from such participation.

A group of us do not underestimate the importance and value of such benefits but feel that focusing solely on them can neglect the potential value of later life learning in a democratic society. This concern has led us to explore, using the vehicle of Conversation into Action seminars, whether it is possible to arrive at a better understanding of key social issues and, as a result, adopt a more critical stance with a view to either engaging in further research or in campaigning. The issues considered in seminars so far include the age limitation of jury service, the implications of sheltered housing and intergenerational issues that are raised by housing.

This workshop will outline the approach that has been used so far with a view to stimulating discussion about whether this is the most appropriate way to enhance the connection between later life learning and citizenship, participation and democracy.

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Working with migrant communities: achieving cultural competency in dementia care
Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

Research on dementia care in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities has highlighted the need for cultural competency training for those working professionally with people with dementia and their families. It has been evidenced that while many health professionals feel that they need more training to improve their knowledge of both dementia and the cultural norms and religious practices of BAME people with dementia, access to this sort of training is variable. Because of the acute lack of quantitative and qualitative data about the health and social care needs of BAME communities, and how they are best met, training to improve cultural competency in services is difficult. Whilst training for basic Asian language communication skills is useful, the diversity both between and within BAME communities also needs to be addressed.

This paper reports the findings of research with Sikh carers of a family member with dementia living in Wolverhampton in the UK. It highlights evidence that demonstrates the diversity of the Sikh community and challenges assumptions of homogeneity. The findings of this research demonstrate the need for health care professionals and service managers to apply a person-centred approach to care when working with people with dementia from migrant communities in the UK and their families. Cultural competency is a contested term with various understandings and definitions. This paper will present the evidence base to support the notion that cultural competency refers to an understanding of diversity and represents a value-based perspective that recognises individuality – similar to that of person-centred care.

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“Too old, interested but frightened by it”: older adults with sight and hearing problems learning to use new technology

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

This presentation focuses on older people with dual sensory impairment (DSI) learning to use new technology. We illustrate how problems of learning to use new technologies can be complex for this group, both because of their age as well as their sight and hearing problems. The research participants (38 people, between 58 and 99 years old) were interviewed and observed up to four times each. They had different levels of sight and hearing problems, varying from severe to moderate. Many research participants also had other health issues, some of which had an impact on their ability to learning or using new equipment.

The technologies used by the research participants varied from mainstream technology (e.g. smart phones applications) to assistive technology (e.g. pendant alarms). Many also had sensory impairment specific technology (e.g. screen readers), but even this equipment is usually designed for people with single sensory impairment and can be challenging for people with DSI.

To tackle the barriers for learning to use the technology the research participants drew on the skills and abilities gained throughout their life, for example previous interest in technology or in learning new things. The role of support networks was significant in many cases. These included informal support networks of friends and family, as well as sensory impairment or ageing groups and organisations. The use of the technology was still rarely utilised to its full potential, often because issues of suitability and usability.

Technology can support the independence, safety, communication and engagement in society for older adults with DSI. While many research participants found strategies to overcome the barriers, the potential of the technology to support their everyday life was not fully utilised and formal support for learning to use them was limited.

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‘It’s a two-way thing’ – the benefits of giving: a study of learning in the fourth age and the role of volunteer learning mentors

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A) is a social enterprise which recruits, trains, places and matches volunteers (‘learning mentors’) with older people living in care or domiciliary settings. Older people and volunteers form partnerships which develop around a focus on learning and areas of interest identified by the older person. Building on the discipline of educational gerontology, L4A promotes the value of learning as a tool for increasing wellbeing in later life and its vision is to improve quality of life through mental, social and emotional stimulation tailored towards the specific needs of vulnerable older people.

This presentation reports on the findings of an independent evaluation, drawing on qualitative interviews with 69 people involved in L4A’s provision within five key areas determined by the organisation. Our paper discusses key findings from the generative aspects of L4A’s work by highlighting the rich experiences of learning mentors who were unexpected mutual beneficiaries. By drawing on diverse literature in relation to volunteering with older people, we were able to identify that the L4A learning mentors offer a unique contribution through dialogue (Freire, 1970) which is distinct from traditional befriending. Through their relationships with older people this specific group of volunteers demonstrated the importance of learning interventions in achieving more transformational outcomes for promoting the older person’s self-reported wellbeing. The extent of reciprocity and generativity identified challenged traditional stereotypes of what older people might contribute to social relationships outside of those with family, friends and associated with formal care. Further, for those learning mentors who were students in higher education, the experience had unexpected benefits – encouraging some to change their future career intentions, life choices and courses as well as employability. Other non-career related benefits included changes in thinking about the learning mentor’s own family and reflective comments on end of life experiences that were clearly life changing. Learning mentors demanded to extend their networks beyond what was traditionally offered by the organisation.

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Dr John Miles

Generation before age - is it time to teach this ‘fuzzy and arbitrary’ concept

Powerpoint presentation available [here](#).

Abstract

Since the millennium the idea of ‘generation’ - despite its being identified as a ‘fuzzy and arbitrary concept’ - has been more and more widely adopted in the literatures of social relations, political commentary and, particularly, marketing. Its derivative term ‘intergenerational’ is diversely, and imprecisely, used with respect to family life, education, community practice, and conflict over distribution of resources and public debt. The term does retain a surprising potency.

I suggest it may offer a more meaningful window on shared identities than chronological age - the trick is to identify when this is the case and when it is not. Here I consider some of the frameworks that might help structure a course module on the topic. I report on three case sketches: one of online responses to Jill Novak’s widely distributed pdf document ‘The Six Living Generations in America’; a second of the methodology behind Pilcher’s discussion of three generations of social change and feminism, and the third the psychoanalyst Christopher Bolas’ account of how generational identities are formed.

Overall, I aim to focus learning on an appreciation of the contested uses of the term before moving discussion in two loosely-related directions. The first, following Pain’s definition of ‘intergenerationality’, is towards an intersubjective account (similar to that behind Biggs and Lowenstein’s formulation of ‘generational intelligence’). The second requires the appreciation of generational identity as an elective process rather than a passively received identification within a pre-determined category.

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‘This course was a lifeline’- How informal adult learning impacts other areas of older students’ lives.

Powerpoint presentation available [here](#).

Abstract

Increasing emphasis is being placed by the Government on the need to assess the value of informal adult learning and the impact it makes in people’s lives. The Government recognises that informal adult learning contributes to other Government policies by improving people’s (especially older people’s) health and wellbeing, ability to access digital technologies, cultural development and active citizenship, all of which can potentially decrease the burden on public finances. However the evidence, if any, to show this impact quantitatively has been unrepresentative and sporadic.

This paper will present the findings of the quantitative research with hundreds of older students who responded to questions on the wider impact of their learning with the Workers’ Educational Association. The findings demonstrate that informal adult learning has a significant impact on many areas of older students’ lives. These range from building and developing skills, improving health and wellbeing to sparking enthusiasm to be active and engaged citizens of today’s world. It also demonstrates how impact extends beyond the individuals to impacting families, communities and our society as a whole.

The paper draws conclusions on how the positive impact of informal learning can be an important catalyst to counterbalancing the gradual decline in wellbeing as people become older. It explores some recommendations on the steps needing to be taken to ensure that we become better at evidencing the impact of learning for older people and also how at building a sustainable network of older people who define and lead on their own learning agenda. Email: [INaz@wea.org.uk](mailto:INaz@wea.org.uk)

Paper: ‘This course was a lifeline’- How informal adult learning impacts other areas of older students’ lives.

Introduction

Increasing emphasis is being placed by the UK Government on the need to assess the value of informal adult learning and the impact it makes on people’s lives. The Government recognises that informal adult learning contributes to other Government policies by improving people’s (especially older people’s) health and wellbeing, ability to access digital technologies, cultural development and active citizenship, all of which can potentially decrease the burden on public finances. However the evidence to show this impact quantitatively has been atbestpartial, unrepresentative and sporadic.
This paper will present the findings of the quantitative research with over 600 students who responded to questions on the wider impact of their learning with the Workers’ Educational Association. This research was undertaken in the spring of 2014. The findings demonstrate that informal adult learning has a significant impact on many areas of older students’ lives. These range from building and developing their skills, improving their health and wellbeing to sparking their enthusiasm to be active and engaged citizens of today’s world. It also demonstrates how impact extends beyond the individuals, impacting families, communities and society as a whole.

The paper draws conclusions on how the positive impact of informal learning can be an important catalyst to counterbalancing the gradual decline in wellbeing as people become older. It presents recommendations of the steps needed to be taken to ensure that we become better at evidencing the impact of learning for older people but also how to build a sustainable network of older people who are able to define, understand and respond to their own learning agenda.

WEA adult education and older students

The Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) is the UK’s largest voluntary sector provider of adult education, which is committed to widening participation and education with a social purpose. It is a community learning provider that works in over 2,500 community based venues and in local networks with partners, providers and services, supporting students to take their next steps be that in further learning, volunteering or employment. The WEA also has over 3,600 volunteers working in a range of roles. The organisation engages with a diverse range of adults in terms of age, ethnicity, disability and previous educational experience, with nearly half of students returning to education after more than three years. During 2014-15, the WEA recruited over 61,000 students on 9,700 courses in England. In line with the organisation’s mission, 69 percent of the funding is allocated to disadvantaged students. The WEA’s mission and values are to develop educational opportunities for the most disadvantaged in society and to:

- raise educational aspirations;
- ensure opportunities exist for adults to return to learning;
- bring great teaching and education to local communities;
- involve students and WEA supporters as active members to build an educational movement for social purpose;
- and inspire students, teachers and members to become active citizens.

A typical WEA student is female, over the age of 50 who is retired, married or cohabiting and does not have children under the age of 18. Over 70% of our learners have an income less than £20,000 a year and around 25% are from Black Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds, 14% have a long term mental health condition or illness and 32% have a long term physical disability or illness. 53% of our students claim state benefits.

The majority of WEA students join a WEA course to improve their knowledge in a particular subject, to keep their mind and body healthy and to do something fun in their spare time. On average WEA students finish formal full time education at the age of 20, but 40% left school aged 16 years or younger.
Students do a variety of courses within the curriculum areas but predominately do short 10 week courses.

How the WEA collects and reports on impact of learning

This research investigated the impact of a single, short (between 15-30 hours) WEA course completed in the autumn term of 2013. The sample included students who had completed a variety of community-based courses.

Data was gathered using a quantitative telephonesurvey adapted on the main from the Community Learning Student Survey (developed by the UK Government’s Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) (BIS, 2013) sent out to all WEA students with email addresses. The survey has been adapted to make the questions more relevant to the WEA and the students it attracts. In total, 659 WEA students responded to the survey in spring 2014 (about four months after their WEA courses finished). The data was weighted for non-response and non-coverage and thus the sample was representative of the entire WEA student population. Impact on different student groups was analysed by taking key demographic characteristics into account and have been reported where statistically significant. Students’ comments from the survey were also analysed to understand the impact from a qualitative perspective. This mixed methods approach to understanding the wider impact of learning on students provides a valid, representative and rich insight for us to report on WEA, 2014.

The impact WEA adult education makes on older adults

The data from the nationally representative impact research suggests that about 54 percent of WEA’s students are aged 60 and over. Here the key benefits and impact that WEA adult education makes to the lives of older people are summarised.

1) Staying involved
As older people retire and may not be heading to an office or getting out and about each day, they often miss out on important social interaction that they may need to stay alert, healthy, and maybe even ward off certain health conditions such as dementia. Research has shown that social interaction offers older adults many benefits and staying socially active and maintaining interpersonal relationships can help maintain good physical and emotional health and cognitive function (Ogg, 2009). People who continue to maintain close friendships and find other ways to interact socially live longer than those who become isolated. Relationships and social interactions even help protect against illness by boosting older peoples’ immune system (Larkin, 2008).

WEA empowers older people to play an active role in their communities and maintain their social networks. Ninety-one percent of students claim that WEA courses helped them make new friends and meet new people. Eighty-six percent also claimed that they met people on the course they would not normally mix with (e.g. people of a different age, ethnic or social group), and nearly all (98 percent) enjoyed meeting these people. Thirty-nine percent of older students are more interested in making their community a better place to live as a result of the course. Additionally, 27 percent are better aware of how to influence decision-making and 37 percent claim they are able to play a more positive role in the community as a result of WEA course they attended. Moreover, 11 percent of
students have become more involved in voluntary activities (mainly joining a group or an organisation, organising an event, and doing administrative work).

WEA conducted longitudinal research by interviewing a nationally representative sample of WEA students in two waves - the first wave (Spring 2013) was with a sample of 522 students, and the second wave followed up 276 students from the original sample (Spring 2014). This research suggests that benefits of courses can have a longer term impact. For example, 18 months after their course 38 percent of older students reported involvement in voluntary activities. As a result of the course, seven percent of students also registered to vote, eight percent contacted local, regional or national authorities, three percent joined an association, union or a party, eight percent took part in a demonstration, petition or a campaign, and 21 percent took more interest in local or national affairs. In addition, 26 percent live a more sustainable life and 30 percent improved family relationships due to their course. Therefore staying involved is the first step to many other impacts of learning for older people, and one such significant area of impact is health and wellbeing.

2) Helping to maintain the health of older people

Many adults aged 65 and over spend, on average, 10 hours or more each day sitting or lying down, making them the most sedentary age group (Dogra and Stathokostas, 2012)

There are many reasons for keeping the brain as active as the body as we age. Exercising, keeping the brain active, and maintaining creativity can actually help to prevent cognitive decline and memory problems. The more active and social you are and the more we use and sharpen the brain, the more benefits accrue (McFarquar and Bowling, 2009)

WEA courses help maintain both physical and mental health in older students. Six percent of older WEA students report having a mental disability (or a mental health condition expected to last 12 months or longer) and 37 percent have a physical disability. Additionally, about nine percent evaluate their health as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. In light of these statistics, 91 percent of older students claim WEA courses helped them to keep their mind or body active. Almost a third (31 percent) reported that courses helped with their health problems. Outcomes appear greater for older people with disabilities and poor health: 70 percent of those with a mental disability, 50 percent of those with a physical disability, and 54 percent of those with poor health reported an improvement. Additionally, 77 percent of older students reported feeling better about themselves due to the course and as much claimed courses helped them alleviate everyday stress.

WEA courses also increase healthcare awareness in older students, in particularly in those who have a disability or poor health. Thirty-three percent of older students claim they have a clearer understanding of where to go for information about health and wellbeing as a result of their course. This result is much higher for older students with mental disabilities (61 percent) and with poor health (54 percent). A quarter (25 percent) of all older students know better how to access support for a health condition (this rose to 56 percent among those with mental disabilities). Twenty-three percent have a better understanding of physical activity and its impact on health (56 percent among older students with mental disabilities). Twenty-one percent of older students can better understand and question advice given by healthcare professionals (this amounts to 51 percent among those with mental disabilities, 31 percent for those with physical disabilities, and 44 percent
for those with poor health). Furthermore, 64 percent (80 and 70 percent among those with mental and physical disability respectively) are more likely to encourage others to get involved in learning to improve health and wellbeing. Almost one-fifth (19 percent) of older students do sports or exercise as a result of the course. The impact on the health and wellbeing of older students was quite significant in this research, however a notable impact was also made on the skills development and employability of older students also.

3) Helping to maintain the basic skills and employability of older people
Less than 6% of the education and skills budget is allocated to those over the age of 19. Yet of the 13.5 million new jobs to be created over the next 10 years only 7 million (will be filled by young people coming into the workforce, and that assumes that they have the skills. Also by 2020 over one third of the workforce will be over the age of 50ACAS 2012. So mid-career education and training needs to become the norm and by increasing the supply of education courses available to older people, many social and health issues can be avoided.

Only about five percent of WEA older students are employed (part-time or full-time) with two percent unemployed and looking for work. Of those employed, 38 percent claim WEA courses gave them new skills they might use in a job, 25 percent claim they are able to do their job better, 17 percent feel more confident in progressing in their career and 8 percent stayed in a job they would have otherwise lost. Of those unemployed, 84 percent feel more confident about finding a job in the future and 69 percent have better knowledge of support services for the unemployed. WEA’s longitudinal research shows that employment outcomes take longer to materialise. Moreover, thirty-eight percent of older students (of 14 percent who found the question relevant to them) are more aware of next steps to improve their employability as a result of the course and 63 percent² (of 51 percent who found the question relevant to them) are more likely to promote employability training as a positive route towards employment. Thirty-one percent of older students claimed WEA helped them improve their literacy skills, 10 percent said their numeracy skills and 31 percent said their language skills. This amounted to 50, 42 and 31 percent respectively among the ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) students, who make up about 4 percent of all older students. Seventy-two percent of older students also know better where to go to improve their English, Maths, ICT or vocational skills as a result of the course (89 percent among the ESOL). This is quite poignant with the evolution of the concept of ‘retirement’ where there are overlaps between retirement and employment and where people are often semi-retired, or they return to work after retirement and more generally where people are retiring later.

4) Developing, and passing on, interests, curiosity and knowledge
Coping with change is difficult, no matter how old one is. The particular challenge for older adults is the sheer volume of changes and transitions that occur over a short space of time, including children moving away, the loss of parents, friends, and other loved ones, changes to or the end of a career, declining health, and even loss of independence. But that sense of loss needs to be balanced with positive ingredients, to have a formula for staying healthy as we age. Adult education is one of those ingredients.

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Most (91 percent) of the older students in the WEA say they discuss coursework with their community and the majority (90 percent) also talked to their family members about the course. Twenty-two percent exhibited coursework and 23 percent produced written material for their community. Nine percent produced or contributed to a website or a video as means of sharing their course with others in the community. A half (50 percent) of older students also took part in independent learning after their WEA courses (mostly reading printed materials, using information from the internet, watching TV programmes or DVDs, and visiting museums or libraries). This progression in learning independently and cascading of learning can easily be overlooked when looking at impact, therefore the WEA impact research is also taking an active approach to capturing the impact learning has on families including the grand children of older learners.

5) Cultural engagement
A recent poll by the Arts Council in England (ComRes, 2106)) has revealed that 76% of older adults (aged 65 and over) felt engagement with culture contributed to their happiness, and 60% to their health, and 50% said it was important in helping them to feel less alone.

However, only half of those older people actually attend or participate in the arts as often as they did when they were younger. The main reason given for this decline was the poor accessibility of many of the cultural sites but more importantly not having anyone to go with was a significant factor. An important impact of adult learning that can be difficult to capture is how it provides the links and networks older people to other like-minded people to be able to develop their knowledge and passion and to enjoy, understand and contribute to a diverse, shared and evolving society. For example as result of WEA courses, 43 percent of older students claim they are happy to take part in debates and listen to people who are different from them, 51 percent are also happy to put forward an opinion and 41 percent know how to support their view better, 44 percent feel more comfortable changing their opinion and 32 percent know how to approach a difficult question better. WEA courses also helped to improve appreciation of culture in older students: 64 percent value creative thinking more, 52 percent value art, poetry and music more and 56 percent understand how art (including film) can be used to influence people as a result of the course. Furthermore, 57 percent of older students have a greater understanding about other cultures because of their course, 44 percent understand and know more about their past, while 66 percent learned about other people’s experiences. Sixty-three percent have a greater appreciation of the fact that all sorts of people need to be involved in building cultural identity, 65 percent feel that cultural institutions need to be accessible to all and 44 percent wish to explore information about another culture. Furthermore, 15 percent became involved in a local cultural group.

As a result of the course, in their spare time 49 percent of older students read more, 41 percent visit museums or galleries more, 32 percent do arts and crafts, 27 percent go to cinema or theatre more, and 24 percent listen to music or play an instrument.

The role of education in changing the negative rhetoric around old age

The world is in a state of a global demographic revolution, whereby in the next few decades, elderly people are likely to be a significant majority worldwide. The EU population is ageing rapidly: the proportion of the population aged 65 and over will rise from 17.1% in 2008 to 30% in 2060 (European Commission, 2015)
Greenwald et al. (2003) developed a technique called the 'Implicit Association Test' (IAT). They believe it can be used to measure automatic attitudes and stereotypes, which may form the basis of prejudice. Racism has been extensively studied using the IAT and there is also a test to measure ageism. Results from the age test reveal that, regardless of what age, it is easier to associate ‘negative’ words with older people and ‘positive’ words with younger people than with the reverse association. British legislation outlawed age discrimination in employment and training over 10 years ago; following an EU directive from Brussels making discrimination on the ground of age illegal. However it seems changing the culture around ageing is a lot harder to achieve, and consequently needs research, awareness building and the construction of a positive and productive perception of ageing.

Old age is a cultural construction, in much the same way as are the other phases of life. For heuristic purposes, concepts are devised like chronological age, biological age, mental age, social age, and many others (Bytheway, 2013) Since these age constructions are devised, each of them relevant to a specific discipline, problems are likely to surface when a specific categorisation of age is sought to be harmonised with another to try and understand phases in life. Take for example chronological age with social age; while the former is reckoned in years counted from the date of birth, the latter (social age) grades life in terms of activities an individual is supposed to carry out from birth to death. Therefore, a synchronisation of chronological age with social age results in normative propositions like ‘women should get married before they turn 25’, or that ‘one should retire at the age of 60’. In other words, activities are spread out according to the presumed conception of the chronological age. Hence, the assumptions and expectations relating to chronological and social age in turn manifest in a form of discrimination called ageism (Morgan and Kunkel, 1998). The good news is that we have begun to make headway on a number of these issues, through campaigns, and publications, targeted both at employers and businesses, decision makers, and at the community at large. We have the legal protections against discrimination, and the regulatory frameworks that lay the groundwork for a fair and equal society, irrespective of age. But the biggest battle is still in front of us. We need to change the way that age and ageing itself is seen; not as a burden, or a terrible inevitability, but simply as another stage in life, rich with its own opportunities for businesses, for communities, for education and for older people themselves. Education plays an integral part in this process. As educators we have a key role to ensure that there is increasing inter-generational co-operation. For educational institutions can be one of the most important forces in bridging the generational divide. One of the greatest opportunities we have in combatting age discrimination is to shape and mould the understandings of future generations to overcome widespread apathy, and the feeling that such issues just don’t matter. Likewise adult education for older adults provides a vital lifeline to staying involved, building networks, maintaining health and wellbeing and having the resilience to live active and enriched lives in their later lives.

Moving from learning to leading: Involving older adults on leading on their own learning

Research consistently demonstrates the benefits of volunteering for physical and mental wellbeing (WHO, 2012). Giving back to the community is a wonderful way to strengthen social bonds and meet others, and the meaning and purpose one finds in helping others will enrich and expand one’s life. Volunteering is a natural way to meet others interested in similar activities or who share similar values. It is widely recognised that active ageing can enhance the quality of life when people age by creating opportunities for participation, security and health (Musick and Wilson, 2007).
The link with social participation demonstrates that supporting educational participation could have wider impact for older people. Older adults who attend courses are more often engaged in volunteering, more often members of social associations and use the Internet more frequently. This is in line with Musick and Wilson (op. cit.) who have argued that ‘participation breeds participation’.

The WEA has over 3,600 active volunteers who volunteer in varying capacities. A significant number of WEA volunteers actually support the WEA in leading on learning activities. These are through constituted branches (volunteer led education) who identify their own learning needs and then through the support of the WEA organise and run educational activities all across the UK. The WEA also assesses the impact of volunteering on the lives of thousands of volunteers across the country. Over half (52%) of the WEA volunteers confirmed volunteering at the WEA had changed their life. When they were asked about the changes they have experienced since they started volunteering, there were many positive impacts reported by the volunteers. The respondents in the online survey were asked specifically about a set of changes some of the existing literature which have explored the impact of volunteering were proposing.

Volunteers, who were interviewed by telephone mentioned many other benefits they gained from their volunteering experience. For example WEA volunteering helped to build confidence after having a long period of being out of the labour market and also prepared many for joining the work force again. Also volunteers who experienced a life changing situation, such as moving to a foreign country, retiring or losing a loved one, enjoyed connecting and sharing their knowledge with students who were experiencing similar circumstances. They also reported feeling active and like they were doing something meaningful after directly being able to see how much of a difference their commitment and volunteering contribution was having. Volunteering with the WEA also had a significant positive impact on the volunteers’ health and wellbeing, where 79 percent were more satisfied with life, 77 percent were happier, 56 percent felt more energetic, 53 percent felt stronger and over a third (34%) were less stressed by volunteering.

**Sharing Best Practice: What enables the WEA to successfully implement this approach to impact measurement?**

- Building evaluation and research at the start of projects and activities and linking with other management information systems to avoid duplication
- Allowing time to review literature on the topic and linking with national research and bench marks for comparative purposes
- Reflecting on and improving research approaches and strategies to strengthen the methodology and consequently the findings as well.
- Having a trained and dedicated research unit which has expertise and specific responsibility for applying and utilising research intelligence to inform practice and policies and a centralised approach allows dissemination to a local level
- A central team also ensures that ethical regulations are adhered to at all times, to ensure the research claims are credible and stand up to external and internal scrutiny
- Having a central research team also supports WEA departments and stakeholders to revive their campaigning ethos through easy policy access, interpretation and consultation
- The research unit tries to ensure dissemination on impact is audience appropriate
- Building research capacity throughout the WEA through embedding a culture of research and reflective practice throughout the organisation.
• Utilising the skills base within the research team to help raise income through evaluations and consultancy activities so that it is self-sustaining and not an additional burden on the organisation

Conclusions
What constitutes as ‘later life’ and who are considered to be ‘older adults’ continues to be the subject of much debate. How people view later life is likely to be significantly influenced by both internal perceptions and beliefs and external socially constructed images. Our ageing experience is tied to the way in which society uses age to assign people into roles, to channel people in and out of positions in the social structure, to allocate resources, and to categorise individuals. As a result, the potential for using biological markers or some notion of functional age is severely limited for theoretical, conceptual and technical reasons. It is a fact that everyone ages. It is in the interests of all generations, and all people, to help create an environment that gives us the power to live positive and valued lives, and to take steps to ensure the wisdom and experience acquired over many decades is not lost to the next generation. This is where education plays such a pivotal role and the evidence from the research undertaken by the WEA highlights some of the positive impacts WEA courses have on students across the country. It adds to the body of research which highlights the value of adult learning to individuals, communities and wider society. The WEA attracts a high proportion of older students and the impact made on these groups is particularly poignant. To summarise, this report has shown that WEA courses:

- develop important employment-related and life skills that help improve students’ wellbeing in and outside work;
- improve students’ engagement with their communities and foster a community spirit;
- improve the health and wellbeing of students and enable students to make better health decisions, particularly those with long term health conditions;
- encourage students to take up voluntary work as well as provide skills useful in voluntary work;
- encourage students to be more active citizens;
- develop students culturally and improve their understanding;
- provide useful skills, confidence and improve employment opportunities for both the employed and unemployed;
- encourage students to take up taught courses and learn independently;
- have a substantially higher impact on students from ethnic minorities and students claiming means-tested benefits and;
- have cascading benefits beyond students and into families and communities.

References


Case studies of some of WEA’s older learners

**Fact File**

Name: Norma Scott  
Starting Point: Very low confidence, concern for dyslexia, found reading and writing challenging  
Achieved: Reading and writing skills that substantially improved quality of life

Norma started attending an English class around 8 years ago. At that time she was suffering from very low confidence, panic and anxiety attacks, was concerned about her dyslexia and found reading or writing challenging. For years Norma used to feel embarrassed as a mother when she could not help her children with their homework from school. ‘I chose to study Functional English because as a middle aged woman I was sick of struggling in my life and was so fed up of not being able to read or write’, Norma explains. She achieved her Entry 3 level English in 2015. She also participated in the WEA Inclusive Archaeology course and volunteered to accompany a group of adult students with mental health difficulties to an archaeological excavation. Travelling independently and having confidence to do so was a major achievement for her.

Norma further challenged herself by speaking about her volunteering experience and her own learner journey at the project celebration event in 2014. She told the participants about her dyslexia and how attending English classes enabled her to build her skills and confidence to the point that she is now able to read short books to her grandson. Norma describes an immense impact literacy courses had on her independence: ‘I am really happy that I can now read my own letters and sort out my own affairs like hospital and Doctor appointments. I can read things like food packaging and labels when I am out and about shopping’, Norma says. ‘I can find my way around hospitals when I have appointments by reading the signs all around me rather than needing to keep asking folk where I need to go’.

www.wea.org.uk
Fact File

Name: Marjorie Lacy
Starting Point: Retired and looking for new activities
Achieved: Published stories, running poetry and reading groups

unearthing your hidden talent

"I was surprised I could write poetry and stories"

Workers’ Educational Association

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Fact File

Name: Geoffrey Oates
Starting Point: Diagnosis of dementia, living alone, in need of a carer daily
Achieved: Improved memory, mental health, mobility and self-sufficiency

unearthing your hidden talent

There’s been a complete change in Geoffrey’s memory, his newly developed humour, his improved mobility and his increased confidence

Workers’ Educational Association

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Marjorie first started a creative course with WEA back in 2008. At that time, she was retired from her work as a shopkeeper and looking to take up new activities. Marjorie says that in the course she discovered she could write stories and poetry, which she did not do since school.

Marjorie continued with creative writing courses with WEA and has now been taking them for about seven years. ‘It had big impact on me, which got bigger over the years’, says Marjorie. These courses and keeping up with homework give her something to engage with every day and a reason to research for her stories online. Marjorie also notes that she and other learners recognise important social benefits they all get from the courses.

Marjorie writes something most days and has had her stories accepted into publications. One of her biggest achievements was getting ‘highly recommended’ in the writing competition on behalf of the charity KIDS, which she entered with a story about her mum’s Alzheimer’s. The story was published in a book called ‘Turning the page’.

The courses also gave Marjorie enough confidence to start reading and poetry groups as voluntary work. Most of her learners are older and she witnesses them benefiting. ‘There is a lady whose husband died six months prior,’ recounts Marjorie. ‘At first she was very lacking in confidence. Now she writes better poems than all of us and got enough confidence to join other clubs. Things like these have a knock off effect’.

Geoffrey is a 93 year old gentleman living alone 20 years after the death of his wife. They had no children and no relatives nearby. He has a diagnosis of Dementia and has three daily visits from carers who prepare his meals. Before the WEA course, Geoffrey was very quiet and was hesitant to speak, frequently saying he had memory problems. He was unable to move safely, so the Care Team had re-organised his home. He did not leave his house.

Geoffrey was told about the “Painting for Health” classes as he had done a number of drawings in different styles in the past. During the classes, he paid close attention to all the instructions and introductions to each session. At the end of each session, the tutor explained what style and artists the class would be studying the following week. Geoffrey would prepare for this and collect his own work in that medium and style. The tutor always allowed time to concentrate with him on these pictures and encouraged Geoffrey to talk about them. Thus, Geoffrey has become much more animated and interested in a variety of issues. He has begun again to read newspapers and has kept interesting pictures of animals for him to copy.

A fellow artist who has known Geoffrey over several years has been amazed at the complete change in Geoffrey’s memory, his newly developed humour, his improved mobility and his increased confidence. Geoffrey is now confident enough to use the upstairs of his house and has got rid of the commode. He is expressing opinions readily and is less worried about the issues that troubled him a few months ago. Geoffrey is planning ahead to sort out his many possessions and a move to more suitable housing, as well as to continue the class in Autumn.
Carlie Newman
TOFF (Trips for Older Females and Fellows), UK

Away from a formal setting: educational and cultural tours for older people

Abstract

It is now acknowledged that older people can enjoy travel as much as younger people and often reveal a spirit of adventure in choosing destinations for their trips. Travel during later life offers the chance to pursue actively interests that people may not have had the opportunity to engage with whilst working. Certainly, the popularity of educational travel experiences of all kinds has greatly expanded in recent years as witnessed by the growth of organisations providing travel-learn opportunities such as Road Scholar in the USA.

The focus here is a discussion of educational travel for older people based on a unique UK venture, Trips for Older Females and Fellows (TOFF). It was set up by the author who was then Director of a London-wide charity giving older people a voice in areas of concern to them and her late husband. Aimed specifically at the over-50s, TOFF has been in existence for twenty years and organises visits and trips to places of cultural and educational interest primarily for those living in Greater London. Costs are kept as low as possible. There is currently a large Afro-Caribbean membership and continuing enthusiastic participation.

In the countries visited, a specific programme and native guides are arranged as appropriate to each group with visits and information on culture, education and leisure opportunities as well as health matters for seniors. A number of visits have been made to the European Parliament with talks and the opportunity to question MEPs from different political parties. There have also been meetings with local politicians in Cuba and South Africa and the opportunity to get together with local elders in Moscow, Russia. Other recent trips have been long-haul holidays to India, Vietnam and Cambodia.

As part of the presentation, two participants will offer their perspectives on the general and learning benefits of a TOFF holiday.

Email: carlie.newman@hotmail.co.uk
Gerontological Higher Education and academic research in ageing across the UK. A scoping exercise and a practical guide for learners.

Introduction: There is a wealth of knowledge and learning resources available in the disciplines of gerontology and geriatrics within the UK Higher Education system. However, gaining access to this academic and research expertise could be a daunting exercise given the absence of a comprehensive data base available to meet any possible interest. The paper reports the results of a scoping study with the aim to explore, chart and present a) the extent of educational programmes in gerontology/geriatrics offered by the UK universities and b) the volume of associated research institutions/centres/groups focused exclusively on ageing issues.

Methods: This scoping study does not seek to indicate the quality of the study design that is employed, but rather draws on the findings to present an overview of existing gerontological education supply in Higher UK Education and the research centres based within the universities exclusively involved with gerontological research. Data sources and searching strategy: Searched all the official universities’ web sites using the built-in search engine. Key words used: ‘ageing’, ‘gerontology’, ‘geriatrics’, ‘older people’ and ‘dementia’. The main research questions were: What is the amount of undergraduate/ postgraduate courses offered by the universities in UK with a gerontological main subject? What are the university institutes/centres/groups conducting ageing research? Inclusion criteria were: (i) based within a university (ii) addressed a characteristic in the title relevant to ageing research.

Results: 84 different degrees founded on level 6 and level 7 in geriatrics/gerontology that are currently offered in UK Higher Education, covering 44 educational programmes. In addition there are 42 academic institutes/centres/groups conducting research exclusively on ageing.

Conclusions: The paper discusses the findings of the scope study, observing that gerontological education and academic research in UK has mostly health-medical and rather less social orientation. It concludes with comments on a detailed practical guide in gerontology/geriatrics and an extensive list of learning resources, including a compilation of academic journals, research programmes and learned societies for the benefit of academics, students, health professionals and any other interested parties.

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Centre of Molecular & Environmental Biology, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

Non-formal adult education using experimental science activities

Powerpoint presentation available here.

Abstract

In Portugal, the University of Minho has trained non-formal adult for more than 25 years, promoting the empowerment of populations and stimulating intervention and change in their communities. In this way we have introduced experimental science with the goals of increasing the scientific literacy of target audiences, as well as differentiation of familiar animation models which usually had strong ageism prejudices.

The following four projects were adapted to different groups of adults, namely elders users of a nursing home (two different situations), war veterans and illegal drug consumers. The experimental activities, games and demonstration, with strong visual and kinesthetic components, carried out within the above populations were: (i) analysis of photosynthetic pigments of the nursing home’s environmental surroundings and observing enlarged details (SEM photographs - Scanning Electron Microscopy) (ii) atherosclerosis (symptoms, risk behaviours, care) and building models simulating the deposition of cholesterol in the arteries; (iii) the sea as a means of communication and support of biodiversity and (iv) observation of the night sky (stars and constellations) and construction of a sundial.

The realisation of these projects involved specific training of non-formal adult educators, carried out by the group STOL (Science through Our Lifes) devoted to communication and dissemination of science, an articulation between the sciences of education and the natural sciences. Methods and theoretical principles of construction of this type of knowledge by the target population resided however in non-formal adult education, understood as lifelong learning and education. The most commonly methods were: group dynamics, role-playing, PBL (Problem-Based Learning) and life narratives. All the activities have been subjected to ongoing evaluation and adjusted accordingly. Email: chisoka.simoes@hotmail.com; claracol@ie.uminho.p

Paper: Non-formal adult education using experimental science activities

Introduction

In Portugal, University of Minho train non-formal adult educators for more than 25 years, promoting the empowerment of populations and stimulating intervention and change in their communities. In this way we have introduced experimental science activities to increase scientific literacy of target audiences, as well as differentiation of traditional animation models, usually connotated with strong ageism prejudices. The following four of these projects streamlined with different groups of adults, namely elders users of a nursing home (two different situations), war veterans and illegal drug consumers. The experimental activities, games and demonstrations, with strong visual and kinesthetic approaches, carried out within the mentioned populations were: (i) analysis of photosynthetic pigments of the nursing home’s environmental surroundings and observation of
enlarged details (SEM photographs - Scanning Electron Microscopy) (ii) atherosclerosis (symptoms, risk behaviours, care) and construction of models simulating the deposition of cholesterol plates in the blood vessels; (iii) the sea as a means of communication and support of biodiversity and (iv) observation of the night sky (stars and constellations) and construction of a sundial. The achievement of these projects involved specific training of non-formal adult educators, carried out by group STOL (Science through Our Lives) devoted to communication and dissemination of science, an articulation between the sciences of education and the natural sciences. Methods and theoretical principles of construction of this type of knowledge by the target population resided, however, in non-formal adult education, understood as lifelong learning and education. The most commonly methods used were: group dynamics, role-playing, PBL (Problem-Based Learning) and life narratives. All the activities have been subjected to continuous evaluation and adjusted accordingly to it.

1. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND STOL - SCIENCE THROUGH OUR LIVES

STOL - Science Through Our Lives is a multidisciplinary project, in the scope of a scientific investigation centre (CBMA - Molecular and Environmental Biology Centre) focused on science communication for different publics, using a non-formal approach. In fact, STOL was conceived as a cultural, scientific and educational project, with the objective of acting at the interfaces of university - society and education - research. For four years STOL have developed several partnerships with public and private institutions (schools, libraries, museums, shopping centres, industries, town halls...). More recently, since 2015, STOL also collaborates with the Master course in Adult Education and Community Development (Institute of Education, University of Minho) providing training, developing strategies and adapting the language together with master students who moderate the sessions at the institutions. All the activities here described were planned and developed in partnership with the STOL team.

2. PROJECTS

2.1 PROJECT “SAILING THROUGH SCIENCE”

Target: Eight elderly persons, seven men and one woman, between 63 and 81 years old, with age average of 68; non institutionalised and autonomous individuals who were at Portuguese Colonial War. The female member of the group lives nearby the institution and engages in all activities due to the open association membership policy.

Intervention location: Portuguese Association of the War Veterans, city centre of Braga; Portugal

Objectives: to promote Lifelong Learning; to facilitate new knowledge’s construction/learning; to bring previous experiences in learning new skills; to relate scientific concepts with everyday facts; to develop one’s self-esteem and self-concept (developing communication skills and evidencing individual’s own critics views); to promote a citizen participation on society (community cohesion).

Methods: hands on, Problem Based Learning (PBL), videos’ observation, ludic and pedagogical activities; dynamic group discussions; brainstorming.

Activities

“Sailing through Science” was developed through five activities, four in institution’s activity room and another in local’s University Chemistry Department.

Activity room’s activities were “The Star and Us”, “The Atherosclerosis”, “Longitudes and Latitudes”, “A Talk about... our body and mind” and the University located activity “Discovering the Laboratory” (Fig 1).
1. “The Stars and Us” was a session about Astronomy and comprised a brief initial introduction about the main theme, followed by a group discussion with: the sharing of proverbs, an astronomy video observation, the realization of a ludic-pedagogical activity, and, finally, the session’s evaluation.

2. “Arteriosclerosis” was a Health Education session where subjects concerning elderly age were discussed, namely relationships, pathologies and alimentation care. As a ludic-pedagogical activity, the target public was challenged to represent the evolution of atherosclerotic plates in blood vessels, in 3D models of cardboard and plasticine.

3. “Longitudes and Latitudes” was an activity about long distance communication devices since telegraph to smartphones, and also about spatial orientation devices, used in Portuguese discovering Age unto Radar and GPS.

4. “A Talk... about our body and mind” was a session about Neurosciences where the structures and functioning of central and peripheral nervous systems were mentioned. Moreover, perception and attention were approached with two ludic-pedagogical activities: a brain’s puzzle and optic illusion challenges.

5. “Discovering the Laboratory”, consisted in a field visit to the Chemistry Department of Minho University - Portugal, with a guided tour and entry into different facilities, especially teaching and research laboratories.

Evaluation: ongoing

Diagnostic evaluation took place through a survey questionnaire, with questions about the interests, the favourite knowledge and favourite scientific areas of the target group. At the end of every session a questionnaire was applied with questions about the theme, sessions’ format, its strengths/weaknesses, and personal achievements. Finally, when the full project was over, a questionnaire about all the activities, with the same content of questions, was applied.

Figure 1- Some details of the activities developed in the scope of the project “Sailing Through Science”.

Conclusions

The institution had a different kind of intervention, more guided to science and formal concepts although in a non-formal way. The target group always had considered themselves as unable to develop new knowledge and go deeper in different kind of education and animation approaches, and with this project they discovered how important in their lives, lifelong long learning activities are.

According to Pinto-Gouveia and collaborators, the Portuguese War Veterans, as well as all individuals with PTSD [Stress Post Traumatic Syndrome] tend to have more “negative thinking, uncomfortable emotions, and physiologic sensations connected to the trigger element of the
trauma” (Pinto-Gouveia et al., 2005, p. 82). In this sense, the educational animation, and all the activities used in this group members spare time, appear as a worth gap-filler in their lives, as happened with this project.

2.2 PROJECT “EDUCATION FOR HEALTH IN ELDERLY AGE: A QUESTION OF HABITS”

Target: 17 elderly between 63 and 89 years old.

Intervention location: rural village near Póvoa de Lanhoso, Portugal.

Objectives: To understand the function of the human skeleton; To develop knowledge about osteoporosis; To promote healthy living habits; To develop cognitive skills.

Methods: Survey questionnaire, participant observation, informal conversations.

Activities
1. “The human skeleton and osteoporosis”

This activity was meant to explain several phenomena through science. We began by placing a chicken bone in vinegar, a procedure that decalcifies the bone showing its new aspect and how fragile it becomes. Then, with the aid of a human skeleton model, and after careful observation, some questions like these were made: "Do you know what is the main function of the human skeleton?”, "Can you list some bones?”, "Do you have any idea how many bones we have?”... After this short discussion, every person in the group was invited to point the skeleton area where they usually have pain. Next, with the aid of a short PowerPoint presentation, the subject of osteoporosis was deconstructed by simple words and a film that depicted what happens to the bones with increasing age was also displayed. Finally, two bones were shown, one decalcified and the other normal, in order to the elderly better realize the differences. To complement this subject, sponges of different consistency and hole pattern were also used to exemplify the changes occurring in the interior of the bones with the advance of the disease. In the end, each elderly person constructed a clay model of the human skeleton (fig. 2).

2. “Cholesterol”

As a way of a visual explanation for atherosclerosis, it was constructed a 3D model of an artery (using a cardboard roll and plasticine) representing the several stages of fat accumulation.

As a preparatory activity, an empty human torso model was shown and, as the organs were being filled into the torso, the audience was asked to: name the organs, to identify their functions and to explain how cholesterol accumulation is supposed to affect the human body. They were also asked what they could do to prevent it. This exercise was complemented with a PowerPoint presentation explaining the differences between good cholesterol (HDL) and bad cholesterol (LDL) and which foods are likely to prevent this pathology. Finally, to complement the activity, it was shown an animated film portraying the disease in the body, in order to deepen the knowledge on the theme (Fig. 2).
Figure 2 - Some details of the activities developed in the scope of the project “Education for Health in Elderly Age: A Question of Habits”.

**Evaluation**

Observation, individual discussions and questionnaire surveys.

**Conclusions**

The elderly liked the activities. Since the topics were of the public’s interest, they all committed in their construction, sharing some experiences and habits of their routine. They clearly identified specialized acquired knowledge. It is also noteworthy the importance of introducing science in fighting ageism. The development of these activities aimed to help to delay the natural negative effects of the ageing process, more specifically on what concerns to the level of health care, physical mobility and nourishment, in order to improve their well-being. “These tasks are demanding for all of us, but particularly difficult for adults with limited literacy and/or language skills. The skills-based approach attempts to strengthen the capacity of adult learners to carry out a broad range of tasks in their daily lives and thereby address the health disparities that are evident in our society” (SORICONE et al., p. 4).

**2.3 PROJECT - “SCIENCE DAY-TO-DAY”**

As part of the dissertation “(Re) Learning to be and to know: competencies’ development of drug consumers”, it was created the module “Science day-to-day”.

**Target:** The project was developed with 12 men targeted to treatment of addiction to illegal psychoactive substances, aged between 20 and 50 years.

**Intervention location:** Therapeutic community to drug addiction consumers and dealers, north of Portugal.

**Objectives:** To promote the integral development (learning to be) of drug addicts and the potentiation of a greater sense of autonomy and community participation. To foster learning moments linked to science and reflection; self-esteem development.

**Methods:** dynamic group discussion; hands-on sessions; photo slide show projections; sundial design and construction comprising mathematical calculus.

**Activities**

1. "I in the immensity of the stars" was proposed to the target audience with the goal of presentation, observation and discussion of the major constellations that could be seen in a countryside night sky (as is the case of the institution’s geographic localization). A digital document
with information related to relevant astronomy topics was developed, after inquiring the target public. The session began by projecting several photographs of the night sky and asking the target public to identify each of the previously studied constellations. Then each participant chose one constellation to produce a representation of it. Briefly, they made small holes in sheets of black cardboard, exactly in the corresponding locations of the stars of the chosen constellation. By placing a light source behind (e.g. a lighted lamp or candle) the observed effect is of a dark sky with the shining constellation. At the end, they shared and discussed their representations among them.

2. "Therapy Garden", has been a sort of guided tour through the institution’s garden where were presented, and informally explained, the main pests that affect garden production. In the end, it was made a kind of QUIZ related to a photo projection activity where various levels of magnification of the main plants produced were contemplated. Users explored what they had seen amplified, going again to the garden (Fig. 3).

3. “Sun Time - the construction of a sundial” was the last activity in the scope of “Science day-to-day” project. With an architectural design previously developed by the group, the sundial was built in the garden of the institution with the collaboration of all users. With this task, not only have been developed geometry and mathematics skills, but also promoted leisure, conviviality and mutual aid (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 - Some details of the activities developed in the scope of the project “Science day-to-day”.

**Evaluation:** ongoing.

Regarding the individual assessment of each activity, evaluation was accomplished through individual discussions and questionnaire surveys. In the final evaluation of the intervention project, the Delphi technique was used.

**Conclusions**

After analysing the data collected through questionnaire surveys, there was evidence of the activities’ success, emphasizing a great motivation and enthusiasm in their realization. The fact that the themes were not bound (as virtually all institutional activities) to the tertiary prevention of drug use, has probably contributed to this success. They have learned some topics of astronomy and know how to apply them in everyday life, which was very positive to their self-esteem, as well as granted greater self-knowledge of users’ capabilities. Another peculiarity of these activities was to provide entertainment, leisure and relaxation moments that allowed users to break their routines centred in the detoxification process.

Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for
living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies. Adult learning and education involves sustained activities and processes of acquiring, recognizing, exchanging, and adapting capabilities. Given that the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures, in this text the term “adult” denotes all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity (UNESCO, 2015, p. 2).

2.4 PROJECT - “A LIFELONG EDUCATION INITIATIVE”

Under seniors’ research-action Project “A lifelong education initiative”, it was held a training activity entitled “Not everything is what it seems.” This initiative intended to explain certain common biological processes and structures that seniors are curious on, through sociocultural animation strategies.

**Target:** mostly female, consisting of 14 members between 59 and 81, with low educational attainment and some with risk of isolation and social exclusion.

**Intervention location:** rural senior centre, near Braga, Portugal.

**Objectives:** To understand vision and perception processes of the world around us; To develop cognitive and intellectual capacities of the elderly, based on a perspective of lifelong learning.

**Methods:** survey questionnaires, observation *in situ*, informal talks, videos’ discussion, hands-on activities, PBL, brainstorming.

**Activity**
The activity started with the separation of the photosynthetic pigments by a chromatographic procedure. Several leaves of different origins were used in order to show that, although leaves are mostly green, several pigments from yellow to red are always present. Actually, it is the degradation of the more sensitive green molecules, the chlorophylls, that explains what happens to the leaves in autumn.

This activity was then followed by the attempt to guess the names of several everyday objects, (mostly field related as the target is a rural community), represented in SEM (Scanning Electron Microscopy) images (for example, a strawberry, a moss, a sunflower, a spider, just to mention a few). Additionally, the public was given the opportunity of handling some of the objects previously observed, in order to compare the perceived characteristics in two levels of observation. Finally, the session was ended with the completion of a small ludic activity that consisted of the sprout of a paper flower, followed by the visualization of short films on bean germination, growth of mushrooms or floral maturation (fig. 4).

Figure 4 - Some details of the activities developed in the scope of the project “A lifelong education initiative”.

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Evaluation: ongoing.

The methods used were survey questionnaire, participant observation and informal conversations. The questionnaire survey allowed collecting information on the perception and satisfaction of participants in relation to the activity. The use of informal conversations and participant observation made possible to obtain information in real time, over the course of the activity. In this sense, the methods used were intended to foster a more appropriate activity to reality, respecting the wishes, needs and interests of individuals.

Conclusions

According to the information gathered on the evaluation, the results of this activity are quite satisfactory. First because of the enthusiasm of learning after "a lifetime", why leaves change colour under certain circumstances. And further, due to the excitement of handling, for the first time, laboratorial material, for example a Pasteur pipette. Thus there is the power of the combination of scientific processes in the educational environment as a way of stimulating and promoting participation regardless of gender, social class, age and academic qualifications. This combination was based on key points such as the valuation of interests, experiences, language and cultural code of the clients, allowing a space for sharing ideas and learning. On the other hand, it refuted the idea that learning science is only for younger people, recognizing and valuing the knowledge and skills of older ones.

The need to ensure that research into older peoples' health is effectively translated to policy and practice is immediate and will increase as populations’ age. Ensuring the use of research and evidence in health system management, policy and decision making is an important challenge in this century. Health systems research and evidence is not always communicated effectively or in a timely manner, and health system managers, policy and decision makers do not always have the skills, tools and capacity to find and use evidence (WHO, 2012, p. 6).

3. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

All these projects are grounded in the understanding of adult education as a lifelong learning process, as set out in the Nairobi Declaration (UNESCO, 1976). They resist to the ideology of adult education reduced only to long learning life, like school and vocational direction, as defended specially since the Hamburg Conference (UNESCO, 1997). The work undertaken in these projects is ideologically linked to an emancipatory and liberating positioning (Freire, 1975; Ander-Egg, 2003) whether of the personal level, whether of community one, or of a deep interconnection between these two levels. Thus, populations (groups composed of aged and very distinct literacy persons) were heard, and were responsible for the construction of their learning in different contexts. Anti-ageism behaviours were obtained with respect to three groups of elderly covered in these projects. “The bottom-up participatory approach [...] involves older people in analyzing and expressing their situation to inform government policies. It is recommended by the United Nations for empowering older people to contribute to society and to participate in decision-making processes. Because older people are the ultimate experts on their own lives” (WHO, 2007, p. 12).

Investment in personal self-esteem and community responsibility, developed with the group of illicit drug users, prevents situations of domestic and social violence, a stigma that usually reaches this type of population, and that unfortunately studies have demonstrated. "The impacts of drug-related interpersonal violence can be substantial, damaging individuals' health and the cohesion and development of communities" (WHO, 2009). In this group, the development of environmental sensitivity and skills can even be useful in terms of social inclusion, particularly at the professional level: "The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is an important mechanism for
Developing green skills. Thus, green skills development can usefully be located within the framework of lifelong learning and social inclusion" (UNEVOC, 2015, p. 47).

All these projects are also based in the belief that we strongly assume, that science is a good for all citizens, not just for an elite of specialists. General public, normally access only to information that ultimately does not produce knowledge, since it was never integrated into their daily lives.

Our goal was to guarantee well-communicated interventions that emphasize the importance of science and the dissemination of real knowledge, not trivialized and distant one. "Knowledge derived from research and experience may be of little value unless it is put into practice and its success monitored and evaluated regularly" (WHO, 2012, p. 4).

The scientific world increasingly proclaims the need for interdisciplinary work, the world’s complexity (Morin, 2014) in which we live and co-construct. This interdisciplinarity is however difficult to happen, especially in academically different areas. These projects demonstrate how that is possible with cooperation, work, study, perseverance and humility.

Presently, for the first time in history, children, parents and grandparents coexist in society, in numerically equivalent fractions - the demographic pyramid looks more like a cylinder - changing the paradigm of society itself. If on one hand we owe this auspicious situation to the lengthening of life expectancy, due, in great extent, to science and technology development obtained during the last century, on the other, the knowledge is not equally available to the populations in general. Everyday, people face new products and services and, to consciously make their choices, they must have access to information. And at this step, non-formal education is indispensable in democratizing knowledge and empowering populations. We know that to change the world we must first transform the way we look at it. And this fundamental change involves considering all human beings, independently of their age, gender and literacy, as having essential skills for survival and for contributing to society up growth: the capacity to communicate and to learn all subjects, even those related to science, lato sensu.

References:


WHO (2009) Interpersonal violence and illicit drugs

Jim Soulsby
“Scamming” and effects on older people: impact, prevention and education

Powerpoint presentation available [here](#)

Abstract

“Scamming” is an increasingly worrying problem for all generations, particularly as we rely more and more on technology. Older people are not exempt from scamming and current research at the University of Chester suggests that the impact on older people can be greater than on members of other groups and cohorts. Older people’s ability to recover - financially and emotionally - is restricted by 'time' and there are other repercussions that impact on their health.

This workshop will look at some examples and types of scams (e.g. fake prize draws, premium rate telephone prizes, miracle health cures); consider an initial definition with a draft typology of scams; discuss some of the preventative and restorative measures which could be enacted with the agencies best placed to facilitate them and, most importantly for this conference, highlight the educational issues.

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Joanna Walker

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What kind of adult learning is spiritual learning in later life?

Powerpoint presentation available here

Abstract

This paper discusses doctoral research (in progress) on spiritual learning in later life. Spiritual learning and development is taken to mean learning about oneself, in relation to others and society, and to a ‘transcendent other’ (however conceived). An educational gerontological perspective on spirituality is rare within the study of spirituality and ageing; it emphasises that most older people have the potential to develop their spirituality and that a mature spiritual dimension to later life contributes to human flourishing.

However, established models of adult life-course development, previously applied to spiritual development, now seem less relevant to older lives in the 21st century, requiring new approaches to research based on older people’s own interpretations of spirituality. Literature on spirituality and ageing features a central role for ‘meaning making’ and a propensity to make spiritual sense of experience in later life, contributing to ongoing processes of self-understanding and mature identity. So, adult learning approaches that suggest how people can and do transform their streams of reflective information are of key interest to spiritual learning – but noting that not all will choose to develop in this way.

My research supposes that older spiritual learners will mostly adopt informal learning styles, such as incidental and self-directed learning, with varying degrees of conscious choice and purpose. Their learning will grow organically rather than in step-like or linear progression, since life experience will effectively direct both the learning content and curriculum. Both cumulative and transformative learning will result from life-course related patterns of change and adaptation. Qualitative methods of enquiry are hoping to elicit reflections on spiritual learning and development from spiritually engaged, community-dwelling older people in South East England. Email: jo_walker26@hotmail.com

Paper: What kind of adult learning is spiritual learning in later life?

This presentation discusses the adult learning aspects of doctoral studies in ageing, learning and spirituality. The working title of my research is currently: Spirituality in later life: a learning experience, and I am based at the Centre for Research on Ageing, Social Science faculty, University of Southampton, UK.

Spiritual learning is a rather abstract concept, and not particularly visible as a form of adult learning. At best it is probably a ‘minority sport’ for those who like that sort of thing. I am taking spiritual
learning to mean the kind of personal development that many people engage with when they
discover, or are brought up with, the possibility of a spiritual dimension to life. Spiritual learning in
this sense does not relate principally to the content of beliefs or spiritual practices, although the
nature of these may result from it. It is more about the processes and changes that people go
through as they develop their sense of self, including any spiritual dimension to that identity.

So, the spiritual learning in which I am interested is primarily about the human search for meaning
and significance, for which spirituality (and, traditionally, religion) offers particular routes and kinds
of support. These routes to meaning-making are the ones on which my study, which examines
people’s spiritual learning and development in later life is particularly focusing. My field of study, at
the intersection of ageing, spirituality and learning, is large and interdisciplinary! In particular, I am
looking at the nature of such learning, how it comes about, and how it could be better supported.

My background in adult education and gerontology sees reflection on experiences as a key process in
both later life learning and in meaning-making throughout life. I am attempting to apply both
reflection and meaning making to an investigation into how spiritual learning and development
support older people’s sense of self in later life. In doing so, I am drawing on two major perspectives
that focus on later life – educational and social gerontology – whereby we see that

- Older people can and do go on learning, including concerning their spirituality. We can
  investigate this through the study of lifelong learning applied to later life (the contribution
  of educational gerontology).
- But older people’s propensity to learn spiritually is also significant for their lived experience
  – important in ways we are beginning to understand as the so-called benefits of spirituality
  in later life. We investigate this through the study of the life-course (the contribution
  of social gerontology).

So I hope I have shown that ‘lifelong’ and ‘life-course’ are both important perspectives for me.
Those that know me will be familiar with my long-standing interests in change and transitions, and
how people manage them. It makes sense to me to study later life from a ‘whole of life’ perspective,
especially as spirituality often has its roots in early life. My study proposes that the impact of life
experiences and our interpretations of them are the drivers of development:

“The gradual unfolding of the capability for spiritual experience is called spiritual
development and involves a growing, evolving capacity to perceive the spiritual elements of
experience. For most people, spiritual capacity continues to evolve throughout the lifespan
and is used to maintain motivation and direction in life.” Bob Atchley, (in publication, 2016).

**Spirituality as an area of learning in later life**

The evidence for growth of a spiritual dimension in later life mostly resides within secondary
research, as it is difficult to demonstrate empirically through primary research involving
experimental designs. Despite the relative lack of what some would call hard evidence, there is a
great weight of argument and conviction that spirituality is linked with the process and experience of
ageing, as people both gain in life experience and contemplate their mortality (or ‘diminishment and finitude’, as it seems to be known in the trade).

As previously indicated, spirituality is very close to ‘meaning and purpose’ and meaning-making, as well as linked to personal development and mature identity.

Both educational and social gerontology literature demonstrate well-established themes of meaning making and the need in later life ‘make sense’ of life’s experience. The processes by which people can and do transform their streams of reflective information (from both within and without) is of key interest to spiritual learning.

Another significant feature of spirituality as an aspect of later life learning is that it does not depend on maintenance of third age status, or indeed on physical or intellectual capacity at any age. Some of the most exciting work on later life spirituality is being done with those in the fourth age of dependence, disability and frailty, including dementia. Traditionally, religion has been a vehicle for people to make sense of life’s challenges and difficulties, to ‘rise above’ them or see them in a broader context. Spirituality seems to be today’s way of addressing this need for ‘gero-transcendent’ personal development, right into late life.

Spirituality as an area of learning and development of relevance to later life is arguably a large research gap in our general understanding of ageing. In his seminal text *Spirituality and Aging*, Atchley (2009) recounts how he was struck by the extent to which teaching and research on adult development and ageing had ignored spiritual concerns. In his research he continually encountered older people who had been consciously nurturing their spiritual capacities and where religion and spirituality were a strong motivating and anchoring source in their lives - an important resource for coping with what life brought. He began to include questions on spirituality in his longitudinal study of ageing and adaptation and then to develop a non-religious vocabulary on spirituality to do this. I felt this whole issue could be studied from a more overtly educational gerontology perspective.

**Identifying research questions**

I realised early on that one doctoral study could not gather data on the scale that would be required to test the (latent) thesis that *spirituality increases with age*. However, there is plenty of research that discusses this proposed link, on which I have drawn to delineate my study. But for my actual fieldwork, it seems prudent to think in terms of ‘lower order’ questions such as:

- **what** do older people think, feel and do regarding their spirituality
- **why** and **how** do they pursue inner understanding and world-views about themselves and their place in the world, and an ‘ultimate reality’?

My main proposition is therefore along the lines of:

Older people can learn about or develop their spirituality given the circumstances, opportunities or support. That is to say, spiritual learning is potentially ‘normative’. But older people who learn spiritually will do so in varying ways, according to cultural, social and individual factors. So later life spiritual development is probably ‘emergent’, rather than universal. This distinction has led to my questioning the applicability of some of the twentieth century models of adult development on
which much spiritual development literature is based, such as Erikson, Havighurst, Levinson, Fowler and lately Tornstam’s theory of gero-transcendence, which tend to assume normative (if not universal) patterns of development.

Research questions

These are my current research questions:

- What is the nature of spiritual learning in later life?
- Why and how do older people recognise their spirituality and develop it?
- In what ways do older people see spirituality as related to ageing or being older?
- What learning environments are conducive for spiritual exploration and development in later life?

This paper mostly addresses the first two of these.

What is spiritual learning and development?

This whole territory is strewn with contested concepts, so terminology and conceptual definitions are impossible to avoid, even for the briefest of considerations. Later life spirituality is a huge theme within multi-disciplinary literature. Definitional issues dominated about a third of papers I initially surveyed in the first year of my study (Walker 2013).

The study of religion in the twentieth century used to include spirituality, but in this century it’s now the other way around, with religion as the subtheme. Alternatively, religion and spirituality are conceptualised and studied increasingly separately. But it seems to me that these are related both in theory and in practice, and are found to be so especially in the views of older people, (who tended to grow up with a more religious world outlook). So spirituality and religion are probably best seen as co-related or overlapping concepts, especially in later life (Wink and Dillon 2002).

Both religion and spirituality feature a quest for meaning and significance that is carried out in relation to (in the realm of) the sacred. Spirituality is increasingly seen as the more individualised means by which people pursue meaning and significance, without relating to particular organisations or group practices. But as social scientists, including adult educators, would argue, relationships with others are formative of individuals as well as groups and societies, and it is difficult to imagine a truly individual path to spiritual understanding. However, the conventional social means by which spiritual questing has previously been undertaken are changing rapidly - from organisational to individualised beliefs and practices – according to the recent UK research programme ‘Religion and Society’ (2007-11) led by Linda Woodhead.

Lastly on conceptual matters, most definitions of spirituality imply the recognition of a something or someone ‘bigger’, outside of the self, with which a defining relationship can be imagined. This is commonly referred to as a transcendent dimension in life, which I am choosing to include in my understanding of spirituality and, therefore, of spiritual development. Otherwise, a non-transcendent quest for human meaning is better understood as an existential search within the human psyche (discussed within philosophy, psychology, the humanities etc).

What kind of older adult learning is spiritual learning?
I hope I have established that the kind of learning in later life that constitutes spiritual learning is to do with self-development, in order to understand the relationship of the self to others (including an ‘ultimate other’). How can we identify such learning when it is not very visible or actively developed? I suggest it can be recognised in three ways:

First, spiritual learning is represented within lifelong adult development models, which propose (and sometimes predict) normative processes and stages of development. These are driven by maturational processes, seen as sequenced triggers such as age/stage or life-course related experiences. The best known of these is Fowler’s model of faith development (1981).

Second, spiritual learning is closely allied with understandings about personal development and human potential: For instance, it is proposed that a person’s primary identity, the self, is developed and maintained through life-long learning - a process that goes mostly unrecognised. We have more awareness about, and engage in conscious activity concerning, the development of our relatively transient secondary identities. These identities are to do with work roles or interests and are constructed through multiple memberships of learning communities (Jarvis 2009). But ultimately, and arguably in later life, our primary identity takes precedence, because it is to do with who we are (now) and still capable of becoming.

Reflection and review are the main learning routes to personal development and the expression of human potential. Learning to know ourselves better offers a kind of emancipatory learning and is part of the lifelong process of individualisation by which we continue to become ourselves. Jung called it ‘individuation’ – a rounding out of the self-identity, which presents itself more urgently in our consciousness in the second half of life. Post-modern gerontologists call it ‘self-realisation’ – the lifelong project of developing and maintaining the self within the socio-historical contexts in which we find ourselves.

Cultural gerontologists add that society itself is also changing, such that social responsibility is less and less involved in supporting this lifelong project. People are increasingly left to develop their own resources and capacities over a lifetime in order to ‘succeed’ at old age in the so-called ‘risk society’. It is interesting to speculate whether spiritual resources may also be regarded as something beneficial that individuals should pay attention to developing, in order to improve their independence in late life. Does this imply a spectre of many more thousands of older people surviving into very old age without a sense of meaning and purpose, or ability to cope with difficulty and loss?

Third, a common sense understanding of life as learning journey often portrays the idea of calling or vocation as a spiritual process. This is, of course, often attached to secondary identities (professions, tasks) but vocation is actually applicable to all stages of life, wherever there is the possibility of identifying and employing one’s passion and unique life talents. It most commonly involves experiential learning ‘on the job’, as the calling unfolds or the scale of the task is revealed.

Where is spiritual learning located in traditions of adult education?

To locate spiritual learning, I have drawn on Findsen and Formosa’s analysis (2011), which represents a rare theoretical discussion of the place of spiritual learning within adult learning. They take the view that spiritual learning sits most obviously and comfortably within liberal humanist
traditions. This approach is reflected in mainstream adult education literature that discusses social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development, with a focus on personal meaning, experience and self-directed learning.

But they also identify a critical educational perspective operating, which asks in whose interests older adult learning operates? It is concerned with empowerment and self-fulfilment; for building spiritual and social capacity; often achieved through both the subject matter and methods of adult learning.

This puts us on the trail of spiritual learning as empowerment in later life – think of the ‘Ageing and Sage-ing’ and ‘Spiritual Eldering’ movements in the US (see online). Literature from the practice of adult education also explores how the act of teaching and learning can entail spiritual development - for instance by valuing the individual student or creating community. See articles and periodic reviews within publications such as *New Directions for Adult Continuing Education* and the US journal *Adult Learning*.

And thirdly, interestingly, Findsen and Formosa propose a new tradition within adult education, which explores the potential of experience shared through story and reflection. It has power to develop people’s spirituality through dialogue and transcendence, transforming life-review into spiritual development. They contrast this kind of personally meaningful learning with the proliferation of market-based adult learning that aims a scattergun of topics at its audience. This commercial response to older people’s learning needs may engage or divert them, but is unlikely to meet the deeper needs aroused by the quest for meaning and significance, they observe.

**Adult learning processes in spiritual learning**

So how are these life-meaning questions to be addressed, through spiritual learning? What kinds of adult learning processes are involved? There’s very little formal education or training in spirituality for adults, although children and young adults have access to some through school and further education. The only adult provision I can readily identify is for those on academically validated vocational pathways sponsored by faith communities, which include an element of ‘spiritual formation’. Otherwise, higher education in areas such as theology and religious studies tend to be primarily ‘learning about’ spirituality rather than engaging with it personally.

So I am arguing that spiritual learning is almost entirely informal, which I take to include:

1) **Incidental learning**: Everyday learning from life experience, specifically experience which is interpreted as having a spiritual meaning. Such learning can just build up or it can have more conscious episodes, perhaps in response to major life events.

2) **Self-directed learning**, where someone is more aware of having a ‘spiritual learning project’ (interest in spiritual matters) which they pursue with varying degrees of conscious planning - such as going on short courses or being an active member of a spiritual group, going on retreats and pilgrimages, receiving ‘spiritual direction, etc. This places most self-directed learning opportunities in the voluntary or private sector.

Whether incidental or self-directed, I would argue that learning patterns are more likely to be organic than progressive and ‘linear’ (as predicted by the adult / faith development models). The
learner is in charge of their own pathway, rather than responding to someone else’s programme design. Furthermore, both incidental and self-directed learning can produce incremental change (where understanding just grows or adjusts) or more major transformative development and change - a sort of enlightenment or ‘ah-ha moment’.

More radical changes in understanding can have outlook-changing results, such as seeing something quite differently or much more clearly (archetypically associated with religious or spiritual development). Transformative learning thus reframes all previous and future understandings. In gerontology, this phenomenon is associated with the power of life review and reminiscence, and with the theory of gerotranscendence (Tornstam 1996, 1999).

Reflection as a key to learning process

A propensity to attribute spiritual meaning to life experience is the means by which a spiritual dimension to life can develop over the life-course, according to US academic Robert Atchley, whose other great contribution to gerontology was Continuity theory – in preference to staged models of human development that featured discontinuities and the transitions between them. Is Continuity a better fit with understandings of adult learning? If the definition of spirituality is ‘meaning search with regard to the sacred’, it is helpful to conceptualise how this is done. Throughout life, and increasingly in older age, people perceive and organise the spiritual elements of experience. Spiritual development comes from contemplating, elaborating and conserving life experience within an individual ‘self-system’ – a person’s way of looking at the world. The mechanism for doing this, as adult educators would affirm, is reflection.

Reflection happens at various levels, however, which helps explain why different people interpret similar experiences differently (including not interpreting things spiritually at all!). Jennifer Moon (1999) proposes a variety of levels of reflection, prompted initially by disjuncture between a new experience or information and existing understanding:

Noticing something different leads to making sense of it in terms of our existing understanding. These initial stages are in fact, relatively unreflective. However, with further thought, meaning-making enables the new experience to be accommodated, thus extending current understanding. Sometimes, a further reflective level, working with meaning, will generate an adaptation or alteration that develops our understanding; perhaps less frequently, the challenge generated by an experience cannot be accommodated even within a developed understanding, and our whole way of seeing something (literally our point of view) will change, experienced as transformative learning.

In this way the levels of reflection helps us represent ‘new material’ to ourselves and then learn from its processing. Reflection also ‘upgrades’ previous learning, integrating it within existing meaning systems, literally increasing our ‘ownership’ of understandings.

Who are spiritual learners?

I envisage two main groups of spiritual learners, although these are not mutually exclusive:

Incidental learners - anyone reflecting on life experience from a spiritual perspective – which has usually been originally derived from a religious or spiritual community or some other cultural context. Life experience includes all sense data from external sources, as well as emotions and
imagination experienced as internal sources. One’s spiritual perspective will act as the frame of reference through which experience will be interpreted, encoded and elaborated (as described above).

**Self-directed learners** – those who have become aware of their interest and quest to develop the spiritual aspects of their self-identity. They may have varying degrees of awareness and plan-fullness concerning their ‘spiritual learning project’. They include, for example:

- Readers and viewers of spiritual material
- People involved in the arts and creative processes
- Members of real or virtual spiritual learning communities
- Participants in short courses or learning events concerning spirituality
- Members of faith or spiritual communities, or those who have left them to pursue their own path
- People reflecting deeply on challenging life events

Such learners may operate in a more individualised way, or in the company of others, but usually in response to the input or views of others. Self-directed spiritual learners can also include members of religions who are pursuing development within their faith communities (such as through short courses, learning events, summer schools, etc). Their development might also result from querying and going beyond received beliefs, doctrines or practices. This latter appears to be a common experience, perhaps as prevalent in later life as in young adulthood, where it is traditionally thought to be significant regarding matters of faith.

**Why learn spiritually in later life?**

I am recapping this presentation by considering the wider benefits of spiritual learning:

1. **A beneficial dimension to later life - an aspect of health, wholeness & wellbeing**

Research evidence links a developed spiritual dimension in later life with better coping, recovery, resilience, sense of self, etc. At face value this is a good thing and is a strong theme in literature, but I am a little wary of the ‘benefits’ rationale. This often leads to instrumental arguments and policies for discovering and then prescribing the right kinds and amounts of ‘spirituality’ - usually with an agenda to reduce the need for social or medical interventions. It is doubtful people pursue their spirituality for health reasons.

2. **Personal fulfilment and human flourishing – maturity, vocation and a developed sense of self**

In preference to the ‘health benefits’ approach I prefer the notion that mature spirituality addresses a slightly different question about what makes for a life well-lived (rather than one that is successful, productive, healthy etc.). ‘Flourishing’ is also a better term, offering an alternative to the contemporary tick-box approach to later life aspirations (physical, mental, economic etc.). This approach also supports a view of the fourth age as still potentially meaningful, since spiritual growth is possible, or possibly more likely, in response to life’s challenges and difficulties.

3. **Source of spiritual capital and social cohesion – community dimensions**
Creating circumstances for fulfilling potential and flourishing are not only self-evidently a good thing, but needed for rapidly growing older populations around the world. Consider the ‘expense’ of not educating to enable spiritual capacity. As well as contributing to individual flourishing, the community dimensions of spiritual learning can combat exclusion and isolation and increase social solidarity, making meaningful later life a social goal worth pursuing.

4. For social, citizenship and family roles – ‘generativity’, and what the Americans call ‘serving from spirit’

Spiritual learning can enhance the recognition and development of roles beyond the labour market that many older people already play in their families and communities. Such roles are expressions of older people’s later life drive to ‘generativity’ (an outward orientation towards seeking the welfare of others) and ‘serving from spirit’ (search for Sage-ing and Eldering to see examples of this kind of spiritual learning). Social, citizenship and family roles are often pursued and seen by older people as part of a lifelong vocation or in response to life’s calling at various stages.

5. To make sense of the story/journey and to end well – the power of narrativity

Spiritual learning contributes to the growing understanding of the power and value of developing ourselves through life review. The skills of self-reflection are valuable at any age but more important in late life, in order to understand our journey. Whether we are professionals working with older people, or individuals seeking to make sense of our own years, ‘hearing’ our own narrative is key for acknowledging our experience and getting perspective on the totality of our lives, including its ending.

Acknowledgements

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Bonus slides / quotes on Spirituality, Learning and Ageing:

“Ageing offers us a progressively wider perspective on the totality of our lives – the higher we climb the mountain, the further we can see.” Thomas and Eisenhandler 1999

“Spirituality refers to an inner field of human experience. It is a capacity that can grow enormously over time. Many of the most spiritually developed human beings are older men and women.”

Atchley 2009
“People learn and grow through experience, a process of ‘education’ whereby knowledge is drawn or led out and exposed to the learner’s everyday conscious awareness from somewhere within.”

Culliford 2011, p.45

“Spirituality recognises the sphere of ultimate meaning in people’s lives; the meaning that arises from the core of one’s being. A task of ageing is to make sense of this life and our part in it; finding meaning is a critical element of what it is to be human.”


References / further reading


**Abstract**

Learning plays an important role in later life. Previous study shows Quality of Life (QOL) can be impacted through learning. Older adults expect themselves to age healthily, actively and successfully; meanwhile, policymakers are interested to improve older individuals’ socialisation and physical health by providing more opportunities of learning activities. In recent years, the University of the Third Age (U3A) movement has developed very quickly in mainland China. The purpose of the study is to explore whether educational activities such as U3A can increase QOL by comparing participants of U3A with non-participants.

For this purpose, a mixed-methods approach was conducted in Xi’an region of China among older adults (aged 55 and over). Data were obtained through both five focus group interviews (n=42) and a self-report questionnaire (n=579) based on EUROHIS-QOL 8 item index. After identifying their different perceptions on QOL by focus group interviews, independent sample t-test was applied by survey data.

Results demonstrate that in contrast with non-participants, older learners who attend the U3A programmes show a better general, health, mental and environment condition. Learning experience can assist to build up a much more positive perception of one’s wellbeing. However, no differences were observed on psychosocial domain between participants and nonparticipants. Meanwhile, institutional and structural factors relating to access to education are positively associated with QOL of older Chinese adults.

This study presents evidence that active ageing can enhance QOL. As a potential way, policy makers and practitioners should pay more attention to U3A programmes and make them more attractive and sustainable. Email: renfwang@vub.ac.be
Abstract

The life course is changing; we live longer and increasingly do paid work until later. There are lots of positives about the ageing society, but individuals, their employers and their communities are not yet prepared, aware and have not made the necessary adaptations. This theme examines life phases, mainly in relation to work and retirement and the role of education in its broadest sense, including ways to bring younger and older people together to bring about change.

A series of recent projects at local authority and community level are examining the possibilities for new approaches. This presentation will bring practitioners and participants together to introduce some recent learning experiences which explore new approaches to transitions including wide-ranging workshops and planning for change at local level. The presentation will include participative methods which will include the audience. Projects represented will include working with local authorities, mid-life transitions, using story to enable reflection and other experiential learning approaches. Reference will be made to age-friendly approaches, all age communities, Ageing Better projects, social enterprises and other new initiatives.

This session will look at transition points from the point of view of learning and ageing. We will look at learning in life phases and stages, consider multi-generational inclusion, and examine how people can be involved in making change.

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End-piece

The final session of the Conference was wide-ranging. It was entitled Conference Reflections - *Theory, Policy and Practice in Learning in Later Life: what needs to happen next?* The session included short presentations, general discussion and small group work and was facilitated by Jonathan Hughes (AEA) and Jim Soulsby (ForAge). It makes sense to divide a report on the session into three parts, of which the third part is the longest and has the broadest implications. The three parts are 1) What should the Association of Education (AEA) do next? 2) What should the ForAge network do next? 3) What are the key ideas to be taken forward from the Conference?

What follows is a record of the session interlaced with interpretation and commentary by the editor.

1) What should the Association of Education (AEA) do next?

Jim Soulsby outlined some of the history of the AEA as it progressed from early discussions in the 1980s among members of FREE (the Forum on the Rights of Elderly People to Education) in the United Kingdom to the formation of the Association of Educational Gerontology (as AEA was first called) in 1985. A few former FREE members remain as members of AEA today. Jim particularly praised the FREE Manifesto, published in 1983. Part of this Manifesto is appended at the end of this End-piece.

The strength of the AEA, Jim said, is that it can draw people in from a range of many different disciplines, professional backgrounds and learning contexts. Over the decades the Association has had many notable achievements but the volume of members and the range of its activities have fluctuated. It is true that AEA has frequently punched above its weight and in recent years has delivered on some important innovations and projects – one can number, for example, this conference, significant participation in three successful European-funded projects and an international journal. Nevertheless, there is currently a need to retain members and to attract new members. The Association has not always managed to be greater than the sum of its parts. An organisation such as AEA needs periodically to engage in succession planning as older members become less active or withdraw. AEA has enormous potential and a not inconsiderable responsibility to continue to stimulate and promote learning in later life.

In the discussion which followed Jim’s contribution, non-members of AEA commented on their prior ignorance of the organization and that the conference showed that it had an important role to play and should make itself better known. Members and non-members felt that this conference showed not only the range of activities and concerns in which AEA is currently engaged but also the potential additions in which it could involve itself. There was a collective aspiration that AEA would find the capacity necessary to expand and to become more prominent and more influential. AEA advertises that “its aims are to advance knowledge, to improve practice and to contribute to the development of policy” in learning in later life. Those present felt that these aims are important and worthwhile and there is much yet for AEA to do under each heading.
2) What should the ForAge network do next?

The EU-funded multi-lateral network project ForAge for later life learning: building on European experience was funded until the end of March 2015. AEA has inherited a number of its significant functions, most notably the management of the ForAge database on later-life learning.

Many conference participants had not known of the existence of the ForAge database or the nature of the ForAge network. However, it was recognised that AEA had yet to determine fully how it was to go forward with the further development of the database and to manage its dissemination and use. Once again, it was a question of identifying capacity and matching it to aspirations.

There was an interesting discussion on the potential of the database. It could clearly be an important gateway to materials which could be openly available to all as a sound basis for future activity and projects. The range of the database matched AEA’s declared aspirations – to advance knowledge, improve practice and develop policy. The most exciting aspect was that the materials were Europe-wide and could be a basis for international discussion and international work on learning in later life. It would be important to involve in such discussion and work people from outside the world of education.

There was interest in the mechanisms for collecting, organising and using relevant data from across Europe and on how in the future AEA could involve other organisations in cooperation to do this.

3) What are the key ideas to be taken forward from the Conference?

This was the key question to be considered in the final session of the Conference, both in small groups and in plenary discussion. Participants certainly had varying opinions of what those key ideas were. It seemed that this depended both on their own reasons for attending the conference and on their background and perspectives. But also they had heard a range of papers in the parallel sessions and had picked out different key ideas.

These key ideas included:

**Complexity of later-life learning**

Some participants said that they now realised that the breadth of thinking, studying and researching about later life learning was much wider and deeper than they had previously thought. Later life learning is complex and can be difficult to define. It is not the same as lifelong learning but clearly overlaps it.

**The need for a language of later-life learning**

We do not always share the same concepts or vocabulary of later-life learning or, if we do, we often use them without checking if we are using them in the same way. Education, training and learning are used by some as synonymous but they are not necessarily the same thing and most would define them as different.
We appear to lack a language for describing later life learning adequately. For example, during the conference it was evident that some UK speakers were using the terminology of ‘informal learning’ in ways different from those understood by non-UK participants. It was argued that this lack of an agreed vocabulary was a particular weakness when trying to argue the case for later life learning. At this point it was pointed out that in 2015 AEA had developed a ‘Lexicon of Terms’ used in later life learning as part of its contribution to the ForAge Project. This offered stipulated meanings for 110 terms and can be accessed from the home page of the ForAge website (http://www.foragenetwork.eu/).

There was a particular concern for more than just agreed definitions or a common vocabulary. It was said that the conference showed that there was significant successful research and development work in many areas directly or indirectly connected with later life learning. It was claimed that a better framework for making the most of successful work, which would encourage cross-disciplinary recognition of later life learning, was needed. Such a framework could explore the policy/practice/theory relationship, would focus on impacts on learners and should draw on learners’ voices wherever possible.

Lack of recognition of later life learning
Participants felt that there is still, in the year 2016, a general lack of recognition of the importance of later life learning. Indeed, all aspects of the topic have been dropping off international and UK agenda. This remains true even among many older people. They - particularly men - often have a perception of the irrelevance of learning to themselves. Of course, participants realised that analysis of such issues needs to be sophisticated and to take account of the larger issues of the nature of societies and the determinants of social change. Moreover, older people are, of course, a very diverse sector of the population: generalisations about them are misleading and (particularly for makers of policy) dangerous.

Professional development
There was some discussion of the three sub-titles of the conference - theory, policy and practice – and their inter-relationship. Although there had been some welcome parallel sessions on practice and some mention of policy, most of the presentations and discussion in the conference had been concerned with research (defined variously) and theory (spanning different disciplines and perspectives).

The question was raised of how these three areas of theory, policy and practice can be brought together. The particular question was – what (from all the material covered in the conference) does one need to know to become a career (educational) gerontologist? Indeed, what is a career educational gerontologist?

There were no answers in the session. However, it was noted that AEA, in its early days, has defined professional development as one of the key areas on which it should work. This interest had lapsed. AEA could consider reviving it.
Key Concepts
Participants were asked to consider the key things which they had learned from the conference. In particular, what ideas would they take from the conference on which they would work and what were the key concepts, new to them, which they would use to frame their thinking. They are not elaborated here but can be found in papers and presentations included in this publication.

Four key concepts stood out:

Learning in mid-life and retirement (see pp.23-26)
For many participants in the conference it became clear that the concept of mid-life was crucial to discussions of work, retirement and learning in later life. Mid-life learning is imperative for the later phases of working life, for the transition into what ultimately becomes retirement and for learning later. Formal learning is often quite inaccessible for those in mid-life and in work.

Precariousness of later life (see p.21)
A number of presentations reminded the conference of the need to focus on society not just individuals when considering ageing. The notion of ‘precariousness’ was introduced and it was thought that it would be worth exploring it more thoroughly - especially in the context of discussions of ‘successful’ and ‘positive ageing’ and exhortations to older people to engage with them. Can older people find the motivation, time and money to participate in learning if flexible labour relations and the rollback of public pensions create new uncertainties for them and even oblige some to re-enter the workforce in insecure and lower-income status positions.

Identity construction in later life (see pp 17 - 19)
It was queried where, if one accepts that people’s identities, even in later life, are subject to a constant process of evaluation and change determined by social imperatives and individual needs, do the processes of lifelong learning fit in? Learning deals not only in everyday learning but also in reflection and enrichment. Do they contribute to the stabilisation of identity or do they potentially lead to an identity that fluctuates? What actually is the role of learning in later life in the complex of definitions, issues and value judgements that connect to this question.

Informal learning (see, e.g., pp 58; 70; 89)
During the conference there was frequent reference to the triad of concepts: formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. Most participants were familiar with the terms and their use in connection with later life learning but during discussions it had become apparent to some that understandings of the term informal learning were different and that definitions were imprecise. This seemed to be a matter of both surprise and concern.

The conclusion was that while the concept, informal learning, was a key one, particularly in research and the making of policy in later life learning, it required immediate work, dissemination and agreement on the development of operational definition.
Re-inventing the wheel in Later Life Learning

The general comment was made that one of the weaknesses in the way in which governments and the EU funded development and partnership projects in the field of teaching and learning lay in repeated failure to disseminate and make known reports from successful projects. This was associated with failure to devote effort and resources to ensuring that worthwhile outcomes are exploited and built upon both in practice and in further enquiry. Thus, good projects can soon be forgotten; later projects come to be funded, through the same processes and for the same purposes, to go over the same ground and probably to achieve, eventually, similar outcomes. Funding for later life learning projects is relatively scarce but this does not make the field immune to the same failures. There are, indeed, in later life learning research, practice and policy tendencies towards re-inventing the wheel.

It was thought that one of the remedies is, therefore, to ensure that what has gone before in research outcomes, development of practice and policy formulation is known. The need is more than to encourage routine ‘literature searches’ - although they can contribute. There should be systematic storing and regular re-visiting and re-evaluation of what has gone before. There needs to be a change in thinking which would lead to action taking place in the context of a rich and relevant legacy of ideas, experience, outcomes and implications. It was pointed out that the ForAge database could develop to stimulate this change.

As we observed, at the beginning of the final session of the conference, on which this End-piece is reporting, Jim Soulsby drew attention to the origins of AEA and its connection to protagonists in the Forum on the Rights of Elderly People to Education. In 1983 FREE published its Manifesto. This merits study both for what it says on learning in later life which remains true and fresh today and for what it recommends – although the latter is partly bound by the organizational forms, economic context and political culture of the United Kingdom in the early 1980s. If we are looking for a rationale to explain why we work and/or are interested in this field of later life learning, we need look no further than the first few paragraphs of the Manifesto. The 1983 words have a strength and vigour which resonate well in 2016 and there is little need to change them (except, perhaps, for the use of the noun ‘elderly’ which is often seen today as having negative connotations). The Manifesto begins:

The ageing of our population is changing the structure of our society as a whole. Only if the elderly educate themselves, and the rest of us, in an awareness of our new situation will we be able to accommodate ourselves to this general transformation.

Justice between age groups requires us in any case to ensure that older people in Britain should benefit as far as they possibly can from the educational system which has been so greatly expanded by their own economic efforts.... They should now have access, as of right, to all the intellectual, cultural and aesthetic facilities and practical skills, which in their own judgment they need and desire... Such facilities should be available to all older people whether they are living in their own homes or in residential accommodation.
There are further and quite specific benefits which it is now generally recognised would come from education in later life. These benefits would arise from:

a) the fostering of self-reliance and independence among older people and the enhancing of their mental and physical health, thus potentially reducing demands which are made on public and private resources;

b) the assistance which education should give in coping with practical and psychological problems in a rapidly changing world;

c) the strengthening of the actual or potential contribution of older people to society;

d) the growth in self-awareness by older people and the fulfilment of dreams and aspirations which found only inadequate satisfaction during early years of life.

Appendix 1: Conference Programme

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 5th April
[Lunch—optional alternatives available on campus at own cost]
Reception desk opens at 1200

1400 Opening of Conference: plenary (CMR15)
Dr Jonathan Hughes, Open University, Chair of the Association for Education and Ageing
Welcome and Introduction

1415 – 1530 Session 1: plenary (CMR15)
Professor Keith Percy, University of Lancaster (AEA)
Jim Soulsby (ForAge Project Co-ordinator 2012 – 2015)
Learning in Later Life: the view from the ForAge Project 2012-2015
Questions and discussion

1530 Refreshments

1600 – 1715 Session 2: parallel sessions

Stream A (CMR 1)
Senior moments: Reflections of the CINAGE project and collaborative advances
(Jennifer Granville & Teresa Brayshaw)

Non-formal adult education using experimental science activities
(Chisoka Simoes)

Stream B (CMR11)
Generation before age - is it time to teach this ‘fuzzy and arbitrary’ concept?
(Dr John Miles)

Conversations into action: can later life learning enhance citizenship participation and democracy?
(Dr Jonathan Hughes)
**Wednesday, 6th April**

Reception desk opens at 0845

**0915 – 1030 Session 3: plenary (CMR15)**

Professor Franz Kolland, University of Vienna

*Identity work and lifelong learning in ageing societies*

Questions and discussion

**1030 Refreshments**

**1100 – 1250 Session 4: parallel sessions**

**Stream A (CMR1)**

- Away from a formal setting: educational and cultural tours for older people
  *(Carrie Newman)*

- Working with migrant communities: achieving cultural competency in dementia care
  *(Dr. Karan Jutla)*

- Older students’ perspectives on lifelong learning: reflections from the Ransackers educational adventure
  *(Hilary Farnworth)*

**Stream B (CMR11)**

- Later life learning: wearable technologies for health
  *(Dr Caroline Holland)*

- “Too old, interested but frightened by it”: older adults with sight and hearing problems learning to use new technology
  *(Dr Emma-Reetta Koivunen)*

**1250 Lunch**

**1400 – 1515 Session 5: plenary (CMR15)**

Dr. Jane Watts, Independent Consultant

*Lifelong learning for changing times: mid-life and retirement transitions*

Questions and discussion

**1515 Refreshments**

**1545 – 1700 Session 6: parallel sessions**

**Stream A (CMR1)**

- Drama with older learners: challenge, experience, outcomes
  *(Carol Allen)*

- Memory in Later Life: How to grow your hippocampus and why this matters
  *(Dr Val Bissland)*

- 1710 Video presentation (CMR1)

  *Is educational participation associated with quality of life of older Chinese adults?*
  *(Renfeng Wang)*

**Stream B (CMR11)**

- It’s a two-way thing – the benefits of giving: a study of learning in the fourth age and the role of volunteer learning mentors
  *(Professor Peter Lavender)*

- What kind of adult learning is spiritual learning in later life?
  *(Jo Walker)*
Thursday, 7th April

0915 – 1030 Session 7: plenary (CMR15)
Professor Chris Phillipson, University of Manchester

*Developing new policy agendas for later life learning: critical perspectives from a changing life course*
Questions and discussion

1030 Refreshments

1100 – 1215 Sessions 8: parallel sessions
Presentations of papers by participants

**Stream A (CMR1)**

“This course was a lifeline”- How informal adult learning impacts other areas of older students’ lives
(Iram Naz)

*Gerontological higher education and academic research in ageing across the UK*.
*A scoping exercise and a practical guide for learners*
(Christos Pliakos)

**Stream B (CMR11)**

Transitions, preparation & resilient communities (workshop full session)

(Prof Jane Watts & Dr Hannah McDowall)

**1215 – 1300 Session 9: plenary (CMR15)**

Conference Reflections from Jim Soulsby (ForAge) and Jonathan Hughes (AEA)

*Theory, Policy and Practice in Learning in Later Life: what needs to happen next?*
Discussion

1300 End of Conference

[Lunch — optional alternatives available on campus at own cost]
Appendix 2: List of Conference Participants

Conference: Learning in Later Life: Theory, Policy and Practice: April 5-7 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation (if applicable)</th>
<th>Dates attending</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carol Allen</td>
<td>AEA</td>
<td>6th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Val Andrews</td>
<td>The Women’s Institute</td>
<td>5th April</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Belsey</td>
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<td>6th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Val Bissland</td>
<td>University of Strathclyde</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<td>Katharine Blight</td>
<td>TOFF</td>
<td>6th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teresa Brayshaw</td>
<td>Leeds Beckett University</td>
<td>5th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anna Dyderska</td>
<td>Stowarzyszenie Trenerów Organizacji Pozarządowych, Poland</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<td>Jane Evershed</td>
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<td>6th April</td>
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<td>Hilary Farnworth</td>
<td>Ransackers Association</td>
<td>6th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Granville</td>
<td>Leeds Beckett University</td>
<td>5th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parvathy Harilal</td>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Caroline Holland</td>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Jonathan Hughes</td>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<td>Anita Hughes</td>
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<td>6th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Anne Jamieson</td>
<td>Birkbeck College, London University</td>
<td>6th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karan Jutlla</td>
<td>De Montfort University</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Emma Koivunen</td>
<td>Manchester Metropolitan University</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Franz Kolland</td>
<td>University of Vienna</td>
<td>5th – 6th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>LucjaKornaszewska-Antoniuk</td>
<td>Stowarzyszenie Trenerów Organizacji Pozarządowych, Poland</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anna-Maija Lageström</td>
<td>Vakka-Suomi Adult Education Institute</td>
<td>5th - 6th April</td>
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<td>Professor Peter Lavender</td>
<td>University of Wolverhampton</td>
<td>6th April</td>
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<td>Dr Hannah McDowall</td>
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<td>Dr John Miles</td>
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<td>Iram Naz</td>
<td>Worker’s Educational Association</td>
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<td>Marlene Patterson</td>
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<td>Professor Chris Phillipson</td>
<td>University of Manchester</td>
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<td>Professor Keith Percy</td>
<td>Lancaster University</td>
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<td>Christos Pliakos</td>
<td>University of Central Lancaster</td>
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<td>Chris Ring</td>
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<td>Päivi Ruusuvuori</td>
<td>Vakka-Suomi Adult Education Institute</td>
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<td>Christopher Senior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chisoka Simões</td>
<td>University of Minho, Portugal</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Soulsby</td>
<td>ForAge</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<td>Susan Stuart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alison Wadey</td>
<td>York St. John University</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<td>Joanna Walker</td>
<td>University of Southampton</td>
<td>6th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renfeng Wang</td>
<td>VrijeUniversiteit Brussel, Belgium</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Jane Watts</td>
<td>AEA</td>
<td>5th – 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janet Whitehouse</td>
<td>Third Age Trust</td>
<td>5th - 7th April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Alexandra Withnall</td>
<td>Warwick University</td>
<td>6th April</td>
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