

Peer learning within community-based programs

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Agenda for the talk

- Inspiration for the comparative angle
- Active ageing framework
- The older learner
- Peer learning
 - Definitions
 - Older adults
 - Value
 - Challenges
 - Promising practices
- Conclusion



Inspiration for the comparative angle

- This presentation is a continuation of connections made at BSG2022;
- Aim: a review of approaches to later life learning;
- Interested in contextual factors that influences approaches to older adult learning;
- Gain insight into different program designs;
- Contribute to a broader understanding of ageing and learning.

Active ageing framework

- Emphasis on participation, engagement, well-being
 - “Active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” (WHO, 2002, p. 12)
- Global agenda
 - Global ageing one of “major forces shaping the 21st century” (World Health Organization, 2007, p. 6)
- The four pillars: health, participation, security, **lifelong learning.**

Learning within active ageing framework

- Benefits:

- Addressing cognitive decline
- Providing socializing opportunities
- Reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness
- Personal growth
- Creating community

- Challenges:

- Troubling benevolent framing
- Shifting dynamics of power and privilege
- Providing accessible and inclusive opportunities
- Addressing limited access to resources and support systems

The older learner

- The term 'older learner' recognizes the lifelong learning potential and the value of learning across the lifespan, irrespective of chronological age.
 - Not a homogenous group
 - Does not solely imply diminished capacity/decline, but recognizes abilities and contributions of older learners.
 - Challenges age-based assumptions/stereotypes and discriminatory practices



The older learner

- Older learners as agentic individuals with multifaceted identities (Chené, 1991; Clark, Heller, Rafman, & Walker, 1997);
- The power of the social aspects of learning (Duay & Bryan, 2008; Kim & Merriam, 2010);
- Continuous learning is an important aspect of ageing as it facilitates “living fully through learning” (Boulton-Lewis et al., 2006, p. 281);
- Ageing could be re-invented through education (Cruikshank, 2003);
- The benevolent project of older adult education must be approached critically (Formosa, 2011).



Peer learning: Definition

- Peer learning as learning with and from each other
- A form of collaborative and community educational practice
- Co-construction of shared knowledge and understanding (Roschelle & Teasley, 1995)
- Definition: “acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions” (Topping, 2005, p. 631).





Peer learning: Older adults

- Growing interest for older adult education (Clark et al., 1997);
- Multiple forms and present across contexts: formal, non-formal, informal (Vseteckova et al., 2022);
 - Community-based contexts (Balyasnikova, 2019)
 - Health promotion (prevention and treatment / coping)
 - Specific skills development (IT, language, calligraphy)
- Ageing well public talks -a community / service provider co production process
- Supports active ageing (Baschiera & De Meyer, 2016);

Peer learning: Value for Learners

- Empathic relationship due to shared challenges (Jin et al., 2019; Uchino, 2004);
- Vicarious experience “I can do it too” (Pellichero et al, 2020);
- Enhancing creativity (Romero et al., 2012);
- Culturally-relevant learning experience (Haltiwanger et al., 2012);
- Social connectedness among equity-deserving groups (Oetzel et al., 2020);

Peer learning: Identified Challenges

- Wide range of older learners' educational backgrounds (Choi, 2009);
- Blurred roles (learner-mentor-teacher-facilitator) (Balyasnikova, 2020);
- Benevolent construction of community is not realistic (Balyasnikova, 2019);
- Evaluations on the benefits are mixed (Margrett & Willis, 2006)
- Older adult does not participate as "I have not been asked" (Kartinah & Surnami 2021)

Peer learning: Promising Practices

- Importance of communication among all members (Pinto, Waldemore, Rosen, 2014);
- Engaging older adults in co-creation of curricula (Balyasnikova, 2019; Cai, Sun, Kosaka, 2018);
- Critical community-based approach (Brown, 2020).



Conclusions

- Research on peer-learning in later life highlights its value for learners;
- Collaborative nature of peer-learning reflects active ageing agenda;
 - Promotes social engagement and participation in different roles
- Further applied research is needed to better understand effectiveness, implementation strategies and outcomes of peer learning within the framework of active ageing.
- Overall, a more systematic way in approaching the engagement of wider public at the community and societal level is needed.

“The success of adopting low or no cost collaborations with older people, community groups and public/private partnerships in parallel with a shared vision of sharing knowledge and research accessible to everyone is evident.”



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Thank you

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