

Intergenerational Education Plan

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Contents

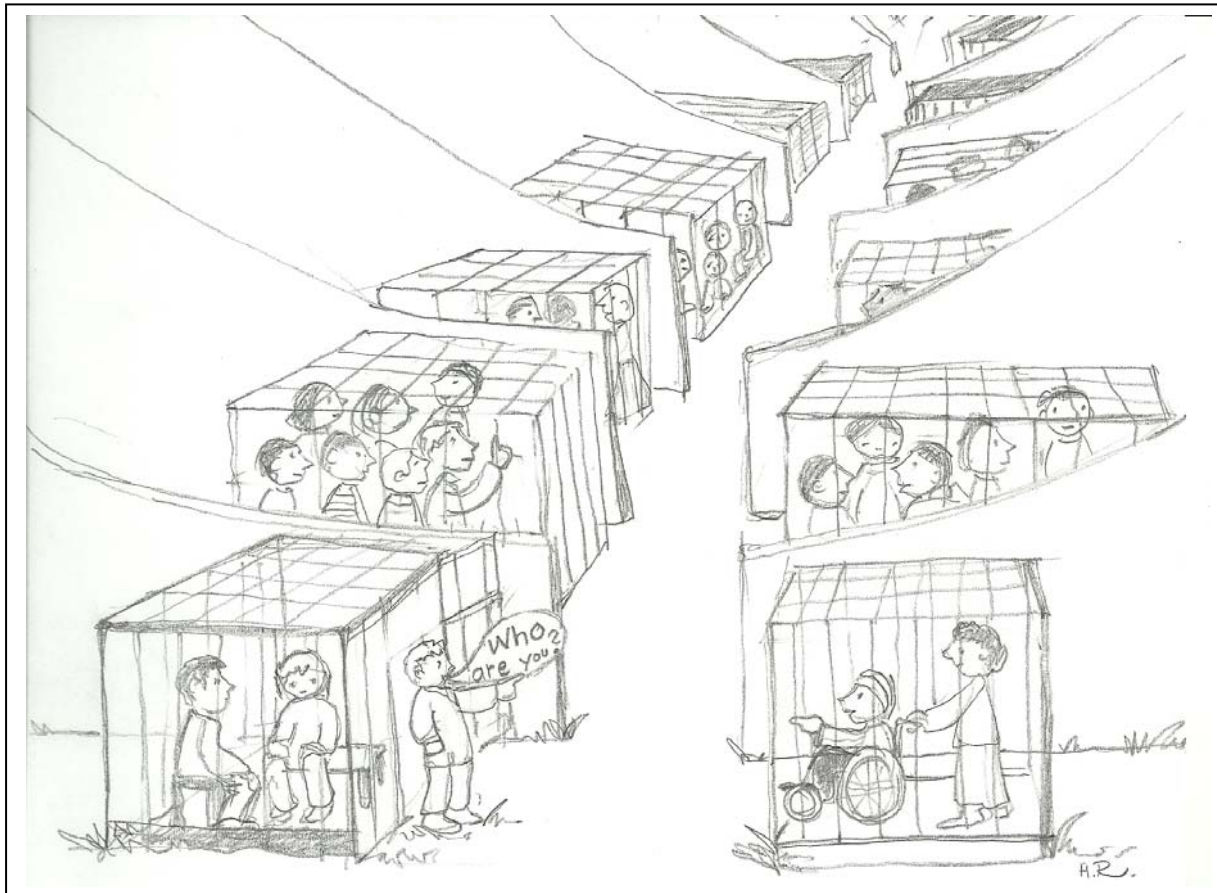
Introduction

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Once upon a time	4
Preface	5
1. Intergenerational Education Plan –The Early Life Perspective	6
Ann Kristin Boström	
2. Intergenerational Education Plan – The Adult Education Perspective	8
Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha	
3. Intergenerational Education Plan – The Workplace Perspective	10
Stephen McNair	
4. Intergenerational Education Plan – The Intercultural Context Perspective	12
Birgit Breninger	
5. Intergenerational Educational Plan – The Family Perspective	14
Renate Heinisch – Edeltraud Röbe	
6. Memorandum	16
Radu Szekely	
7. Appendix	
7.1 Links to „Best practice examples“	22
7.2 Authors	22
7.3 Partners of the GoAct-Project	23

Introduction

Renate Heinisch & Edeltraud Röbe



Once upon a time, back when wishing was still possible, there was a country whose people lived in mixed age groups. Neglecting any differentiation of age, they solely counted the years of their lives. Thus young families, youths, adults and younger and older seniors enjoyed a colorful community of frequent contact, common activities and high social cohesion.

One day a stranger appeared and pointed out a side of their common lives they hadn't realized before: the fact of noisy interactions, misunderstandings and the need for a special generation's space and retreat. The people paid attention to his words and soon began to concede that they would need a new order and had to change their living conditions. Instead of mixed age groups, the foreigner recommended special spaces and institutions where each generation could obtain its privacy, intimacy and special attention. Hence people invented preschools, retirement homes, working places with defined aged members, special housing models for smaller families. All of them seemed to be happy and to enjoy their respective privileged age group institutions.

Only by the time people realized that they were involved in a process which affected the lives, relationships and learning opportunities of each generation. The chances of socializing faded, young and old people separated, social cohesion changed. The older among them remembered former times and exactly the day when the stranger had come and promised a decent life. But the man who promoted the "age-cages" was already gone far away. So until nowadays, people have to make efforts to overcome separation of generations in society.

Preface

2012, the European Year, provided a framework for rising awareness of the contributions older people can make to society and for mobilizing stakeholders, policy-makers, persons dealing with educational planning, academics and umbrella organizations at all levels to promote active ageing and solidarity between generations. Parents' Association of Baden-Württemberg with its chairwoman Dr. Renate Heinisch has initiated the project "GoAct" - "Generations in Action", with the ambitious aim of overlooking the whole lifespan and developing a European strategy of intergenerational learning and dialogue.

Nowadays four or five generations exist in parallel and are on their way of converging. Meanwhile, several projects already sample innovative, creative, active, intercultural, reflexive and partnership-based possibilities of enhancing equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. A common ground seems to develop, positive images of age enhancing the spirit of enterprise, satisfaction and serenity and thus contributing to self-confidence, self-fulfillment and self-constitution. The "GoAct Project" is based on the assumption that education is a powerful method to change society's understanding of ageing and to enable a dialogue between younger and older generations.

Within this broad field of the project, four topics have been identified. While they share some concerns, they yet involve different actors, agencies and approaches. They cover all specific learning activities undertaken collectively and beneficially by members of all generations and they raise awareness of intergenerational learning at individual and institutional levels, throughout all spheres of public and private life. The topics emerge from the family field, where the voyage of life begins:

- Intergenerational learning in the field of early education (broadly involving children ages 3-10)
- Intergenerational learning in adult education
- Intergenerational learning in working life (and workplace)
- Intergenerational learning in intercultural contexts
- Intergenerational learning in families

One of the major milestones of the "GoAct-Project" was the development of an Intergenerational Education Plan (IEP). It provides a guide for policymakers and experts in the field of education and adult education on how to raise awareness for topics of ageing and hence change the common image of ageing in society by means of education. Due to the words of the Greek philosopher Socrates: "I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think", the IEP doesn't claim for "teaching" a checklist of certain aims and measures. The IEP rather consists of stimulating impulses, questions, communication, brief background argumentation given by experts and links to examples of best practice. Intergenerational learning should be an asset of consciousness addressing different target groups: trainers of intergenerational learning, parents, politicians and policy makers, journalists, filmmakers, authors of children's books, institutions of educator and teacher training etc. Lifelong learning needs to guide all ages through the humane voyage of life. The key process to this will be to create reflexive images of generations and age groups, of their togetherness and mutual benefit, to build a society of humanity which respects dignity lifelong, from birth to death.

1. Intergenerational Education Plan –The Early Life Perspective

Ann Kristin Boström

Questions for parents and pedagogic institutions:

1. Is awareness of intergenerational learning arising?

- Are you or your institution aware of the intergenerational dimension?
- Do you look through the school materials and react when you find stereotypes of elderly people there? How many of the children have their grandparents in their neighbourhood?

2. Are relationships networked and fostered?

- Are there elderly people in the neighbourhood?
- Have you invited them to read or tell their stories for the children?
- Have the children told stories to their peers that their grandparents have told them?
- Do children tell their grandparents about their life?

3. Are you aware of the diversity of images of age?

- What is your own image of elderly people?
- Do you think of the diversity among them or do you have some stereotypes?
- What are the children's images of old people?
- Are they different? Do you find stereotypes there?
- When you would like to act in practice and involve the intergenerational dimension into your school, there are some questions to consider as well.
- Have you prepared the children for the meeting?
- Have you prepared the elderly to a school very different from when they were young?

Why intergenerational learning and solidarity matters – The Early Life's Perspective

There has been a change in social structures since the industrialization started. Nowadays there are pension funds and retirement benefits for older people, more women work outside their home while their children can stay in childcare. People have to move away from their parents and relatives to live closer to their workplace. These changes have created gaps between young and old people in society. But there is evidence that yet prejudice and discrimination continue to exist in society. Intergenerational communication and dialogue can be the key to promote civic participation and shared understanding between generations.

Children have a need for a person that takes care of their whole person as their psychological and social development depends on the personal care and attention they receive. Of course parents and teachers are of great importance for children but in times of increasing segmentation of society, the importance of older people taking part in children's life in pre-school and school is vast. If this happens, there is evidence proving increased social capital, both for children and older people.

How to overcome intergenerational tensions

Regarding lifelong learning and intergenerational learning, it is important to give children adult role models to learn how adults behave. In several countries it is usual that also older people come to pre-primary and schools to socialize with the young ones. They can read stories, play games, help and talk to the children to make the context more connected to the adult world. Regarding this, there are four important points to be pointed out:

1. Organize the institutions/schools for intergenerational meetings

There are different ways of creating possibilities for intergenerational meetings in schools. Intergenerational meetings can work successfully when relations in school and the relationship between schools and communities are regarded; they are good prerequisites for intergenerational relationships to take place in a positive way.

- Create small respectful communities for learning
- Ensure success for all students
- Reengage families in the education of young adolescents
- Connect schools with communities

2. Prepare seniors and children

When older people come into the classroom out of other reasons than to teach, this implies extra support for children and also a different kind of relationship. At the same time there are important facts to consider before seniors can be involved. Firstly recruitment is important, since the individuals that are accepted ought to be suited to the context of the schools. Further it is necessary to arrange support so they can feel incorporated among the staff. It is important for the elderly volunteers to have specific, clear tasks and give time for recognition and evaluation of programs. It is necessary to prepare the children as well create the best situation possible for building intergenerational relationships.

3. Choosing a model that works in the context

There are programs where senior volunteers contribute and help students and where at the same time students help seniors. Reciprocity is important, which occurs when children/students and seniors meet, whether it takes place on one-to one basis, in small groups or in an entire class.

4. Benefits for children and youths

There is evidence for children enjoying an increased social capital in their classroom when seniors are engaged in their situation, but various intergenerational program models could also significantly contribute to the development of young participants' academic skills. These include: learning how to articulate personal experience and social observations in oral and written form, learning to work as a part of a group, learning about history as a spirited, ongoing process, and learning how to develop and execute structured interviews as well as how to document the results gained. There are other types of valuable skills and knowledge that young participants can gain from their intergenerational experiences. This includes learning things as varied as handicrafts, performing arts skills, horticultural skills, traditional games or cultural history.

The intergenerational perspective involves great potential for increased wellbeing and self-esteem both for young and old generations. When it is planned and implemented in a way that supports the

creation of social capital, intergenerational work always has to be adapted to the actual context in practice in the specific school of a specific country. Much advice can be given but it should always be linked to the cultural context where the actual intergenerational meeting will take place.

2. Intergenerational Education Plan – The Adult Education Perspective

Berhard Schmidt-Hertha

Questions to providers of intergenerational learning:

Course structure:

- Is there enough time for intergenerational dialogues and discussions?
- Does the group size support an intensive interaction of all participants?
- Is it possible to apply the learning contents to real life situations, e.g. in the sense of community education?
- Is there any learning material or didactical material for learners and trainers which focusses especially on intergenerational learning?

Participants:

- Do they regularly interact with other generations in their everyday life?
- Do they have any experiences with intergenerational learning arrangements?
- Are they experienced learners or could there be learning difficulties which might cause learning barriers?
- Do participants of different ages have similar learning targets or do they follow very different aims? If the latter is the case, is it possible to satisfy those different aims within one course?

Trainers:

- Are they prepared to teach intergenerational groups?
- Are they used to working with heterogeneous groups, different types of learners and different learning targets within one course?
- Are they trained to cope with conflicts and difficult group dynamics?
- Do they have didactical concepts to make use of the varied experiences of different generations within the course? Are they able to take advantage of heterogeneity for the learning process?

Organization:

- Is there any assistance for learners and trainers if learning difficulties, conflicts, or any other problems occur?
- Have the learners been counseled before they decided on an intergenerational learning arrangement?
- Are the learners informed about what the course will exactly be like and what intergenerational learning is?
- Have the trainers been briefed about the aims of the course, the participants' expectations, and available materials?

Quality assurance:

- Is there an early phase of formative evaluation planned to diagnose problems in the beginning and hence react on them promptly?
- What strategies are applied to ensure the quality of the learning arrangement? How are the results of the course evaluated and documented?

Why intergenerational learning and solidarity matters – The Adult Education's Perspective

Adult education provides great potential for the promotion of solidarity among different social groups and generations by creating space for social encounter independent from other contexts of life. While in school, interaction between teachers and learners is characterized by a hierarchical structure, “learning together”, without hierarchies, can best be realized in adult education, where representatives of different generations meet as learners. Adult education provides room for encounters in which an exchange between different generations is made possible and through which these individuals, in turn, learn to look at expectations concerning solidarity and togetherness from the perspective of the other respective generation. Joint learning and encountering older generations helps breaking up negative stereotypes regarding age. This deconstruction of negative images of age is essential to provide opportunities for active ageing, based on positive self-concepts during old age and respectful perception of competences among older adults.

In addition to these fundamental effects of intergenerational dialogues, different generations are able to learn from one another in contexts of adult education and to create new spheres of action for each other. While the younger generation can often be very important in familiarizing older learners with digital media, and in helping them using these, younger learners may, in turn, profit from older adults' life experiences. Thus, joint learning also creates opportunities for using and expanding individual and generation-specific competencies as well as for strengthening the social participation of each and every one. Both of these aspects – competence development and qualification for social participation – can be considered the core tasks of adult education and they constitute an immediate contribution to social inclusion of all generations and to solidarity among all generations.

Mutual empathy among generations can be lastingly supported if adoption of perspectives of different generations and understanding of generation-specific world views and interpretation patterns is explicitly counted among the objectives of the educational measure. In the sense of “learning about one another”, the exchange about generational relations and the associated stratification of generations will then become the focal point of teaching-learning-processes. A precondition for this to happen is, on the one hand, the curricular leeway for the topicalization of generation-specific perspectives and experiences and, on the other hand, both willingness and interest on the part of the learners to enter into this exchange with other generations. Furthermore, this way of intergenerational learning requires special skills on the part of the teachers.

Accordingly, programs of adult education directly aiming at an encounter between different generations and going beyond joint study of a subject matter by supporting the adoption of the perspective of the respective other generation should be promoted. Of special interest in this context are programs of adult education that have an impact beyond the immediate learning context by enabling participants to enter into an intergenerational dialogue and by promoting social

participation. The actual aim of such learning projects lies beyond the pedagogically pre-structured sphere of action and extends far beyond the time frame of the formal event. The objective is to engage participants to change the relationship between different generations in a self-controlled and lasting manner.

However, intergenerational learning needs to be strengthened in vocational contexts, too. Here, educational contexts such as vocational further training and in-service training offer great opportunities for topicalizing generation-specific approaches and experiences beyond the processes of everyday work. This seems to become ever more important the more retirement age is deferred. Thus, there is not only a need for appropriate education programs; but rather counseling with focus on intergenerational learning for companies and human resource developers, in particular, ought to be developed.

Yet another precondition for ambitious intergenerational learning projects – be it in a vocational or an extra-vocational context – are suitably qualified teachers. However, so far no supply structures for further training in the field of intergenerational learning exist for these teachers. Here, appropriate programs of further education for professionals working in this field need to be established and expanded.

3. Intergenerational Education Plan – The Workplace Perspective

Stephen McNair

Questions

For older workers

1. Have you thought about what skills and knowledge you have which younger workmates might benefit from?
2. How did you learn the skills which make you good at your job? How might you pass on this learning to workmates?
3. Do your younger workmates have skills and knowledge which you would like to learn? How might you get them to help you?
4. Older people often find it difficult to find work if they become unexpectedly unemployed after 50. Have you considered what skills you have which you might want to offer a new employer if you became redundant in your present job, or how you might develop appropriate skills?

For younger workers

5. Older workers have often learned a lot from their years of experience. How can you learn from them?
6. Do you have particular skills and knowledge which you could offer to older workmates?

For line managers

7. Do all workers have equal access to formal training courses?
8. The quality of peoples' work is often improved if they have a clear picture of how it fits into a broader picture – of the organisation and their own place in it. Do training opportunities help

workers to have a broader view of the organisation and their future careers, or do they focus entirely on the immediate task?

9. Do you make opportunities available to help older and younger workers to share ideas and experience?

For senior managers, and human resource staff

10. Does your organisation encourage workers to learn from each other as well as from formal courses?
11. Have you considered how peoples' aspirations and capabilities for work change with age, and how jobs might be organised to accommodate this?
12. Does training encourage workers (of all ages) to broaden their horizons and career aspirations?
13. Do you have systems in place to enable workers who are approaching retirement to pass on their skills and knowledge to younger colleagues?

**Why Intergenerational Learning at the workplace matters -
The Workplace Perspective**

There are two main reasons why intergenerational learning matters in the workplace: the extending of working life beyond 65, and the speed of change in technologies and practices in the workplace. These two factors mean that the length of working life has grown, and the need for lifelong learning has increased.

In the early years of the 20th century most countries introduced the notion of "retirement", accompanied by some form of pension to enable people to live after they had ceased paid work. However, life expectancy has been rising steadily across Europe ever since¹, which means that the length of this period in retirement, and thus the costs of pensions, have been growing rapidly. As a result Governments have been seeking to raise the age at which people retire². However, simply staying longer doing the same job may not be a realistic option for many. The increasing speed of change in technologies means that anyone who learned their skills before their early 20s, and has done no further training since, will find that they are no longer employable 30 or 40 years later. They need the chance to update their skills and knowledge, probably both through formal training courses, but also through informal learning with workmates, who may be of very different ages.

Although there is some political resistance to retiring later, research suggests that many older people welcome the chance to continue in work if it is interesting; provides them with a sense of being contributing members of society; provides a network of friends; and maintains their income. Although many people believe that people's capabilities decline rapidly around 60, research evidence is clear that most people in their 60s are now much healthier and more capable than previous generations at the same age. Furthermore, changes in working practices and technologies mean that most work now involves much less physical effort than it did in the past, making it easier for people with declining physical strength. Studies of the relative performance of older and younger workers show that older workers typically achieve comparable results, working more slowly, but making fewer mistakes, because they can draw on years of experience. In countries where there are no regulations to prevent it, some people continue happily in paid work into their 90s.

¹ Every five years sees a rise in average life expectancy of one year.

² So that they spend longer contributing, and less time receiving a pension.

Much of the most important learning which people do in the workplace comes from informal contact between colleagues with different skills and knowledge. Often such learning is mutual: involving a sharing of expertise in both directions. The classic case of such learning is where older workers who have had little previous contact with computers and information technology, learn about it from young people who have grown up with these technologies, while younger workers learn the tacit skills which older colleagues have acquired through years of experience and practice. Occasionally such knowledge transfer is formally structured, with programmes organised to help experienced workers to develop their skills as trainers, or to pass on their expertise through structured demonstration, or as recognised mentors.

However, not all work is "good work" and some work damages the health of older workers. A well managed intergenerational workplace is likely to recognise, and make adjustments for the ways in which peoples' aspirations and abilities change across the lifecourse. It will also encourage informal contact between generations and between parts of the organisation, so that workers of all ages get a sense of the underlying purposes of the organisation, their place within it, and the possible opportunities for future career development (which may happen at any age).

4. Intergenerational Education Plan - The Intercultural Context Perspective

Birgit Breninger

Questions (only to be answered by detailed research):

1. How is the functional brain ageing?
2. How do cultural experiences change lives? Which experiences can you associate? How do cultural experiences change neuronal networks?
3. Does neural plasticity result from cultural experiences?
4. Are cultural biases more prominent in older adults' neural activity?
5. If cultural experience is the dominant force in shaping the ageing brain, culture effects will get stronger with age.
6. The way cultural experiences are made earlier in life may increase neural reserve and the potential for effective scaffolding, which is required to meet the challenges in later life. What is the unique potential of intercultural competence acquisition over a lifespan?
8. How can we introduce quality standards for ICC education and trainings in intergenerational learning?
9. How can we prepare people from various professions for multicultural work environments by offering recognized graduate & postgraduate study formats in ICC education and trainings which foster intergenerational learning?
10. How can we support and channel funds to more experimental and explorative culture-specific research in order to analyse how cultural experiences shape the aging brain?

Why intergenerational learning and solidarity matters – An Intercultural Context Perspective

In the 21st century intercultural competence has become a necessary skill not only for working but also for living in multicultural societies. Nowadays the ability to embrace and adapt to various cultural contexts is quite indispensable.

Culture includes networks of knowledge, consisting of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people, as well as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world. Cultural experiences differ, since culture is quite unique, especially in regard to the fact that: Culture is shared, albeit incompletely, not self-selected, socially learned and intergenerationally transmitted, undergoing constant changes, symbolic and ethnocentric and strongly influences many cognitive and sensory domains.

Intercultural competence necessitates a change in the following three dimensions:

- The cognitive dimension, or mindset, includes knowledge of culture – general maps or frameworks of specific cultures, of identity development pattern, of cultural adaption processes, and of cultural self-awareness.
- The behavioral dimension, or skillset, includes the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, build relationships, resolve problems and manage social interactions and anxiety.
- The affective dimension, or heartset, of attitudes and motivation includes first and foremost curiosity as well as initiative, nonjudgmentalness, risk taking, cognitive flexibility, open-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity, flexibility and resourcefulness.

According to research cultural environments sculpt cognitive processes by wiring the brain so it can be assumed that intellectual, social and physical investments made earlier in life may increase neural reserve and potential for effective scaffolding, which is required to meet challenges in later life. It is very remarkable that adults are not only able to learn facts, but are also able to change their entire way of thinking regarding norms and stereotypes.

Implementation of intercultural standards for intercultural trainings has to occur on three levels in order to be effective: the educational sector (kindergarten, school, university, postgraduate education, workplace etc.), the research sector and the implementation of various interculturally informed projects for societies.

It is therefore necessary to

- introduce quality standards for ICC education and trainings targeting all three levels (cognitive, affective, behavioural). With the introduction of standards, the buzzword 'intercultural' can be substituted by a more profound concept and rather constructive approach towards intercultural measures can be introduced.
- prepare people from various professions for multicultural working environments by offering recognized graduate and postgraduate study formats in Intercultural Context Education and Trainings. Intergenerational intercultural education shouldn't be received as 'just' a 'soft skill' that can be taught by anyone who likes travelling and being abroad. More intercultural experts are needed.

- introduce and recognize intercultural skills as a necessary prerequisite for the 21st century workplace.
- advocate and promote intercultural skills in education especially at preschool and school level. According to research, there also is a critical period in culture acquisition, which concerns age, duration (e. g. length of residence) and 'cultural input'.

4. Intergenerational Educational Plan – The Family Perspective

Renate Heinisch – Edeltraud Röbe

Questions for parents and pedagogic institutions:

1. Does the child continuously live in contact with different generations?
2. Do grandparents regularly look after their grandchild and are they reliable partners in childcare? (e.g.: "Grandparental leave" as a possibility to interrupt or to reduce employment to look after grandchildren; commitment as "au-pair-grandmother"; "Grandparents- Service- Points")
3. Does the child live in an intergenerational neighborhood with informal contacts that provide possibilities of chatting, helping one another and broadening one's view of other generations?
4. How do parents/educators speak about age, different ages and their own age?
5. Where and how does a child get in touch with aged people? Which models of age get into their mind?
6. Are educators and teachers aware of the children's images of age? Are there selected books, films or works of art which represent images of age and initiate discussions?
7. Has the community in which a child lives already worked out a program of culture and activities fit to intergenerational requirements?
8. Does the community build a network of cultural institutions, of youth and senior facilitators, of artists and professionals in the social field to foster and promote intergenerational activities? (e. g. „ A village goes game-playing“– One week long, young and aged people discover classics and try new games together)
9. Do children get the chance of making intergenerational contacts in the first pedagogic institutions they attend? Which range of age is the staff? Are older persons and younger professionals part of a greater social space and framework?
10. Are older persons integrated in the institutions' concepts with their skills as laypersons, in daily routines and in communication (e.g. Early Excellence Centres in Great Britain)?

11. Are older people involved in activities with children and are they prepared for their voluntary work and responsibility?
12. "It takes a whole village to raise a child." Is this African saying strong enough to raise the community's interest in enterprises of more innovative intergenerational approaches and to contribute to social cohesion? Which social initiatives and communal coalitions may be important doorkeepers for intergenerational learning?

Why intergenerational learning and solidarity matter – the family's perspective

From the day a person is born, the voyage of life begins. She or he encounters all kinds of people who convey many different ways of thinking, acting and cultural orientations. Thus, every family resembles a world of persons and meanings, deeply engraved in our memory as highly active images. Regarding society, family is the fundamental field in which a person is rooted by emotional bonds and relationships. Family is and always will be the 'home port' from which a child sets off to its lifelong journey.

Social changes in European societies are affecting lives, relationships and learning opportunities of all people, both of older people and young children. Children grow up in smaller families and have fewer chances to socialise with brothers and sisters and different age groups. Older people live longer but often are isolated from younger generations. Increasing separation of generations into same age institutions and spaces leads to the fact that young children and older adults will miss chances of interaction, mutual understanding and reciprocal learning and hence lose the major source of intergenerational bonding.

The birth of a child changes everybody's role within a family. Grandparents often become a reliable and important support for the young family's situation concerning daycare and finances. Grandparents are close and intimate with the child, but they react in a different way than parents and have a complementary role. At the same time, they personally and permanently benefit from the contacts with the young generation and the relationship to their own grownup children. Pedagogic institutions (kindergarten and first grades) have already started to invite voluntary (mostly male) seniors to share activities, read and learn, play, sing and have fun together with children. Older adults obviously possess a key to work with children: They spend time, good ideas and patience to listen to them. Thus, mutual understanding, emotional assistance, patience, reliability and feeling of individual value of the older contribute to the children's human development. While exploring their world, children need partners who answer questions, who admire findings, who encourage curiosity, who are interested in creative ideas. Again it's the older generation who has a central role in explaining and interpreting the world.

By story-telling in everyday life and in its literary forms, which until today is a central mode of transferring experiences and traditions, generations meet in a specific interaction where both members introduce their specific problems, interests and views. As such situations may cause psychosocial dynamics there is a great need of sensitivity. By explaining artefacts (e.g. toys, pictures, furniture, workshops, buildings, streets, also nature), older people seem to be a vital link to human history and cultural heritage. Children need their stories as a kind of vital memory, to find their own positions, to share values and to gain sense of identity and perspectives.

Obviously they are also engaged in similar topics, problems and solutions (e.g. questions of healthy nutrition, careful use of senses, facilities in everyday life like safe pedestrian bridges, pathways adjustable for prams and rollators, ect.). Activities which seem to be quite popular and successful are activities in music, acting, reading, nature, social life which is an important resource for solidarity and later voluntary engagement.

Current research highlights the fact that the younger generation's image of age is the more positive the more frequent and enjoyable their contact to older persons is. In the process of socialization this positive attitude increases and expands to old people outside the family. Due to the findings, young children already differentiate their images of age by taking in account characteristics like appearance (look), personality, health and achievement ability and perceive differences of ageing processes, individual specifics and the importance of learning, activating and caring setting. Thus young people get to know that someday, somehow everybody's life bends toward an end. Many old people are affected by illness, dementia and loneliness in early years; others represent a vital generation of young seniors taking care for their eighty year-old parents and friends.

The bottom line on from childhood shouldn't be fear of age, disease and death and hence capitulation but rather prevention. And this is definitely more than cosmetics. It involves looking for tasks, mobilizing and inspiring engagement. It's not running away from ageing but actively doing it. You have to reinvent yourself each single day and find out what's possible and what's not. This takes time, patience, nerves and attention for everybody's journey in the old age.

6. Memorandum on Intergenerational Learning

Radu Szekely

Introduction

Lifelong Learning, Vocational Education and Training, Active Ageing, Solidarity between Generations, and Sustainability are concepts that have been described for more than a decade as fundamental in the definition of a growth strategy for the European Union. These concepts are also seen in the wider global context as drivers of social justice and sustainable development. Intergenerational Learning has only recently entered the discussion, and there is a more limited understanding of what it truly represents. There is, however, agreement among major stakeholders that it could, in view of the scarce resources available for education in EU Member States, be an answer to several of the challenges faced today. In fact, the untapped potential that individuals of all ages and all walks of life have in terms of transferrable knowledge and skills, combined with their willingness to share these as part of voluntary or remunerated activities, may lead to a model of education where participants are empowered to exchange both skills-for-jobs and skills-for-life. What Europe needs is a coherent set of policies to make this empowerment possible.

On 11 April 1996 the world was told by a former President of the European Commission that "...in confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. As it

concludes its work, the Commission [UNESCO's International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century] affirms its belief that education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development. The Commission does not see education as a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war." (Jacques Delors in 'Learning: The Treasure Within').

In 2000 the European Commission issued a Memorandum on Intergenerational Learning to initiate a broad consultation on the topic of widening access to learning, and a year later the Communication "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" set clear targets for EU Member States, putting adult education at the core of the new Europe. Policies for building a knowledge society have been shaped and are being continuously reshaped, placing social responsibility, cultural diversity and citizens' participation high on the agenda. Policy makers and the civil society have worked relentlessly to establish a stronger connection between education and prosperity, access to social security, environmental wellbeing, and solidarity. Consequently, considerable efforts have been made – at local, regional, national and European levels - to ensure that participation levels in lifelong and lifewide learning sustain significant increases.

More than a decade later, in times of a major economic crisis, where austerity measures and unemployment affect human and social development, the paradigm has changed. The value of education in securing the EU 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is clear. Education is once again rightly harnessed as the solution to the problems of unemployment and poverty caused by economic recession. The "Education and Training 2020" strategic framework has set targets that not only aim to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality, but also to enhance creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in order to respond to some of the economic challenges that we face in the aftermath of the economic downturn. But the strategy has not been designed exclusively to reach employability: promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship remain high among the aims of ET2020.

In line with Europe 2020, the New Skills for New Jobs initiative sets out to promote better anticipation of future skills needs, to develop better matching between skills and labour market needs, and to bridge the gap between the worlds of education and work.

The "Re-thinking Education" Communication correctly underlines that strengthening partnership and flexibility is important for modernising education in Europe. Cooperation and partnership increase the flexibility and relevance of learning and improve efficient use of resources. These should be promoted across and between all levels of policy making and implementation (national, regional, local), between public and private actors, and in all contexts and forms of learning, in pre-primary education, schools, VET, higher education and adult learning. But in our quest for refinement of job-skills and with the speedy changes in the labour market realities, this puts an immense burden on the school systems. Close cooperation between the public and private sector, and with the voluntary and community sector, can mobilise private resources and share the costs of learning, and can be particularly crucial to attracting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups into learning and offering low-

threshold and targeted support. Effective partnerships and cooperation, however, require a shared vision among stakeholders, often demanding consultation mechanisms and sharing of responsibility. Most importantly, this approach needs to be supported by the creation of structures that give easy access to integrated learning services, by new modes of delivery of learning content, by learner-centred programmes, and effective outreach strategies.

Finally, the report “Active Ageing and Intergenerational Learning”, which resulted from an in-depth analysis of the Intergenerational Learning approach at European level, has made a series of recommendations to the European Commission and policy makers in general. Among these are; the urgency of placing Intergenerational Learning at the core of policies designed to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) and to promote the fact that Intergenerational Learning is primarily a purpose-driven activity and not an informal exchange, and encourage its use in enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and the broader society.

This Memorandum takes up the main aspects of the policy documents, reports and communications above. Its purpose is to launch a European-wide debate on a comprehensive strategy for implementing Intergenerational Learning at individual and institutional levels, and in all spheres of public and private life, with their economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

Key messages

The European Commission, through the voice of Commissioner Androula Vassiliou, has defined Intergenerational Learning as all purposeful learning activity undertaken by members of two or more generations in a mutually beneficial way, occasionally or on an ongoing basis, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences. This is the working definition initially proposed by the European Network for Intergenerational Learning and adopted in the current proposal for a Memorandum on Intergenerational Learning as a starting point for discussion and action.

Intergenerational Learning is not therefore just one aspect of education and training; it can become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts. As was the case with Lifelong Learning after 2000, the coming decade may see the implementation of this vision, in fact the return to what was the norm until recently, when generations learnt from each other continuously, in various contexts, sharing responsibility for their own learning and for each other's learning and development. All those living in the European Union, without exception, should have equal opportunities to adjust to the demands of social and economic change and to participate actively in the shaping of Europe's future, making use of the knowledge and skills of their peers, sharing their own knowledge and skills with others, in a spirit of solidarity and co-development. The EU citizen must re-appropriate the right to learn and to share their learning, taking pride in their chance to build upon prior learning, and link competences and qualifications gained across different phases and contexts of life, both leisure and working life, inside and outside formal education and training. This must happen not only at the initiative of policy makers, but in partnership with them, and through the active participation and initiative of the private, community and voluntary sectors – and of individuals.

The implications of this fundamental change in perspectives and practices deserve and justify the debate proposed. The European Network for Intergenerational Learning (ENIL) will ask its members and associates, but also stakeholders at European level and in Member States who are responsible for their education and training systems, to take part in this debate. ENIL intends to draw up a report in early 2014 based on the outcomes of this debate and take up the findings within the framework of its advocacy work.

The six key messages below offer a structured framework for a debate on putting Intergenerational Learning into practice. These messages are based on experience gathered at European level through the research conducted by the European Network for Intergenerational Learning on projects run through Community programmes and on the results of the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity Between Generations (2012). Each key message includes a set of questions whose answers should help to clarify priority areas for action.

Key Message 1

Intergenerational Learning is a flexible pathway to guarantee universal and continuing access to lifelong learning, for gaining, renewing and transferring the skills needed for sustained participation in the European society.

Questions to be answered

- How can Intergenerational Learning be used to relieve current pressure on education budgets?
- How can it inform curriculum organisation and content in a spirit of partnership between sectors?
- How can the private, community and voluntary sectors be motivated to take part in Intergenerational Learning and update adults' skills and competences?

Key Message 2

Intergenerational Learning opportunities can be generated as close to learners as possible, in their own communities, further lowering the barrier to participation by using approaches that involve more than one generation from the same family, from the same neighbourhood or from the same workplace. New programmes and methods must be developed, but facilities already in place can be used through cooperation with social partners.

Questions to be answered

- What kinds of projects and provision already exist that could offer promising ways forward and examples of good practice?
- What kinds of incentives will encourage different entities to co-operate and exchange good practice at multiple levels, including the transnational level?

Key Message 3

Intergenerational Learning can ensure that Europe's most important asset – its people – contributes to the re-launch of its economy and to ensuring high standards of living for all by encouraging them to invest their own knowledge, skills and time in the replenishment of Europe's skills pool, including skills related to entrepreneurship and social responsibility.

Questions to be answered

- How can young people's specific skills be integrated into workplace based training schemes?
How can employers be motivated to support training for entrepreneurship?
- How can postponing the retirement age be accompanied by a scheme to train new workers?
Would the economic sector and Trade Unions react positively to such a scheme?
- How do employers already provide models, time and flexibility for taking part in Intergenerational Learning?

Key Message 4

Intergenerational Learning can harness the efficient use of volunteers' time and resources to reduce the burden on the public budget, especially in relation to social costs and care.

Questions to be answered

- How much of the work already done by volunteers can be used as a flexible learning path and recognised formally as training and career development?
- Is a return to a mutual care model among population desirable?

Key Message 5

Intergenerational Learning can serve as a basis for bringing generations with different economic status and different economic needs together for an exchange of knowledge and competences accompanied by mutual support in other areas of life, for example through intergenerational lodging schemes or social reintegration schemes.

Questions to be answered

- How can mutually beneficial "learning partnerships" between elderly and young people be developed safely and efficiently so that old people would agree to open up unused living spaces to young people or families in need of lodging?
- Should housing development schemes be required to include an intergenerational learning dimension?

Key Message 6

Intergenerational Learning is a way of supporting people to re-establish a balance between work life and family life by creating opportunities for groups (families, community groups, clubs) to learn together in different contexts without the immediate expectation of a learning outcome but focusing on quality leisure activities.

Questions to be answered

- How can families be encouraged to spend quality time together through Intergenerational Learning methods?
- Can Intergenerational Learning be used to support all ages in their process of learning for a long life (transfer of skills and attitudes between generations)?

Working together to put Intergenerational Learning into practice

The debate to be launched through this proposal for a Memorandum takes place at a crucial point in time, simultaneously with the approval and launch of the new EU funding programmes for education, research, culture and cohesion. Although comprehensive and coherent strategies for the implementation of Intergenerational Learning have not yet been developed, there is wide evidence that working together in a variety of partnerships is an essential means of putting any learning policy into practice. The new funding programmes create real opportunities to form partnerships between ministries and public authorities, on the one hand, and the private sector and social partners, on the other, to form public-private initiatives. However, unlike in many other cases, working together effectively in this case will mean going beyond existing efforts to build bridges and pathways between different parts of existing systems, and creating a person-centred rather than learner-centred approach, where the individual is empowered to be learner and educator at the same time, two parts that – at least at the level of provision of education – remain, today, relatively disconnected from each other. This aspect of transferring the responsibility of learning and of educating others from systems to individuals underpins the debate about the six messages above.

The outcomes of the debate to be launched in early December 2013 will help to define priorities and directions for the European Network for Intergenerational Learning, but also to finalise the Memorandum on Intergenerational Learning that will be used as a strong advocacy document and presented to the European Parliament and European Commission for consideration in the beginning of 2014.

7. Appendix

7.1 Links to best practice examples

To find out more about the best practice examples from the workshops ,please, follow this link:

<http://goact-project.eu/workshops/>

To find out more about the best practice examples from pur project exhibition, please, follow this

link: <http://goact-project.eu/exposition-of-projects/>

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7.3 Project Partners

EAEA European Association for the Education of Adults

www.eaea.org

AGE PLATFORM EUROPE

www.age-platform.eu

www.goact-project.eu