Heidelberg Workshop

17 -18 October 2011

Thematic: Intergenerational Learning

Outcomes of the Workshop

Heidelberg Workshop - 17 & 18 Oct 2011

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Thematic : Intergenerational Learning

1. Introduction – why is intergenerational learning important?

If we compare the learning methods applied in today's society with those of one or two previous generations, we will find an enormous difference as far as means, methods and general educational philosophy are concerned.

The main reason for this great difference is the continuous development of computer technology that has influenced to a high degree the way students work and study at school and at home.

One way that different generations can come closer together is the capability of comprehending () the different approaches in the process of acquiring knowledge through people belonging to these generations.

Our global world and family relationships are changing. The changing nature of family units has altered the pathways for two way community support to occur naturally.

To be engaged together is active learning and can provide unique perspectives from all sides.

Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them (Definition of Intergenerational Practice: Beth Johnson Foundation, April 2001)

Research has shown that intergenerational learning can help pupils achieve higher average grades, show an improvement in attendance and fewer referrals for disciplinary action.

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- fight stereotypes of "the old" and "the young"
- reduce resentments , increase motivation

Definition taken from, "Think Community - An exploration of the links between intergenerational practice and informal adult learning"

Intergenerational learning arises from activities which purposely involve two or more generations with the aim of generating additional or different benefits to those arising from single generation activities. It generates learning outcomes, but these may or may not be the primary focus of the activity. It involves different generations learning from each other and/or learning together with a tutor or facilitator. Depending on the aims of the activity, it may or may not involve members of the same family.

http://shop.niace.org.uk/thinkcommunity.html

Positive intergenerational relations have been identified as a key factor in the transmission and exchange of human capital, life skills, culture, values and knowledge within society [1]

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2. **Theoretical approach**

The theoretical aspect of "Intergenerational Learning" has been studied extensively in recent years and continues to be studied, since new data is continuously being added from the research process that is being carried out. The conclusion drawn from this research is that in spite of certain negative issues that have arisen there is a significant positive aspect that is summarized as follows:

The younger learners gain a lot of their knowledge from:
- The experience of older learners
- The knowledge that older people have acquired and apply in practice
- The mature way, through experience, in which older people deal with various problems

On the other hand, older learners learn from the younger ones to make use of technology and thus acquire the ability of getting information and knowledge through computers with which younger users are far more familiar.

The Intergenerational Learning based on the above points constitutes a very useful educational tool.

- to learn from each other
- to learn together
- to learn about each other

http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=u3AxBXTTw0kC&oi=fnd&pg=PA33&dq=+intergenerational+learning+important+theoretical+approach&ots=tRlX6aiRgw&sig=1oGOgUKLiw6S_ii01ZefctpUTZ0#v=onepage&q&f=false

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3. Ways of Intergenerational Learning

According to the learning groups different ways of intergenerational learning have been tried. The method that is considered generally most effective has the following characteristics:

- Choice of the topic: this is to be made in common by the older and the younger learners. In certain cases the topic is decided upon by others and offered to the two groups as a topic to work on and learn from.
- Learning procedure. Each learner group undertakes to implement, independently from each other, part of the learning procedure at a set time. Following this, the two groups meet in order to exchange information and knowledge and to continue working together until the end of the learning procedure.
- Coordination. The learning procedure is coordinated by trainers who have specialized training on intergenerational learning.
- Deciding on the roles and the final target. The trainers in collaboration with the groups of learners decide on the role to be undertaken by each group and the actions to be taken in order to reach the final target.
- Dissemination of the results. The trainers in collaboration with the learners are to decide on the ways in which the results of the intergenerational learning will become known to the broader public.

Intergenerational practice		
Might include: **Parent/grandparent and toddler groups** **Volunteering in day centres** **Befriending**	**Tacit learning Examples**	**Explicit learning Examples**
	Parent/grandparent and toddler groups Volunteering in day centres Befriending	Supporting young parents Community consultation Working together to achieve change in a

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Childcare **Supporting young parents**	Childcare Supporting young parents Participation in community consultation Working together to achieve change in a community Discussion and debate	community Discussion and debate Mentoring Skill sharing Family learning Activities in schools, linked to the curriculum Learning a new skill together
	Possible Learning outcomes	**Possible Learning outcomes**
	Might include: Improved communication and interpersonal skills Changed relationships with community and/or family Increased confidence and understanding Interest in developing skills	Might include: Improved communication and interpersonal skills Changed relationships with community and/or family Increased confidence and understanding New/retained skills Opportunities for further progression

4. Best practices

We could mention two categories of best practices:

a) Within the family, where parents and children or grandparents and grandchildren study together various topics or are involved in learning activities. Thus they participate in non-formal intergenerational activities.

b) At school, the correct educator-student relationship must always be an intergenerational learning procedure during which the educators offer their knowledge and experience and the students their fresh ideas.

1) **support of family learning**: In a seminar with the title "Between fast food and fair trade", lasting for one week,

grandmothers and their grandchildren were invited to a family education centre. The

participants were introduced to facts on regional products as well as on the basics of

nutrition. During the week, the members played "food games", talked about their favourite

dishes, bought regional products from the market and prepared and cooked a meal each

day. This example shows how adult educators arrange intergenerational learning by providing an open learning space, setting the topic and focussing on the cooperation between the generations. In the group discussion with adult educators who provided such learning space for members of different generations, they observed that learning between the generations happens incidentally while the generations were cooking and playing together and that the elderly took over a parenting role.

2) **Intergenerational learning linking different generations by generative themes:** The project "Detectives of Energy" reached out for participants aged from four to 90, all

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coming from a small village. For four days, they worked together on the topics of energy and

sustainability. Adult educators who link different generations by these themes assume that by working together on one topic, different generations are able to include their own generational perspective on the discussed topic. Further, they assume that different

generation-specific knowledge can enrich the learning process of all generations. The inclusion of all generations, each with their own needs, expectations and learning abilities, challenges adult educators from the pedagogical aspect, since this arises the need to offer alternative learning possibilities for some participants – depending on the learning situation.

3) *Intergenerational learning as pedagogical arrangement:* The project "towards a fair city" invited members of the municipal youth committee together with the local senior citizens committee of the city of Münster in Germany. In the beginning, the adult

educators created a setting in which the generations had the possibility to get to know each

other, for instance by interviewing the other generation. After that, they worked together in

small groups on different current and political topics of the city, such as education or

infrastructure. In their discussion the participants brought in their own generation-specific

point of view and reflected it with the other generation. At the end of the day, they presented

a set of topics on which they would like to work together in the future.

Adult educators from this type of practice assume that teenagers and older people have

different ways of thinking and different abilities because generations are all shaped by

different historical events and, therefore, have varying structures of thinking. The visibility of differing intergenerational perspectives is enabled by a variety of didactical practices, for instance by giving the participants the task to reflect certain subjects from their generational perspective.

All best practises taken from: **An Empirical Perspective on Intergenerational Learning Arrangements**

Dr. Julia Franz, University Erlangen-Nuremburg

WOW Grundtvig Learning Partnership 2010-2012

The motivation for the project is to encourage inter-generational learning between elderly learners and young adults, not in initial or higher education, who are at risk of disaffection within lifelong learning and who need to develop soft skills and self-esteem. The project seeks to encourage inter-generational learning between elderly learners and young adults. The project builds on the ICT skills (e.g. navigating the internet and using e-mail) that these young adults already have and encourages them to share these skills with elderly learners who do not have them. This process of inter-generational learning will be mutually beneficial. The elderly learners will have the opportunity to acquire basic ICT skills whilst the young adults will develop soft skills and self-esteem. Both parties will benefit from the breaking down of age stereotypes. Both parties will take part in mobility exchanges.

The Objectives of the project are to:
1. Develop inter-generational interaction between elderly people and young adults at risk of disaffection within lifelong learning

2. Promote basic IT literacy amongst elderly learners

3. Develop self confidence, communication skills and citizenship 'soft skills' amongst young adults

4. Embed a positive inter-generational culture within local communities

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5. Expected results/Benefits

Intergenerational learning is a valuable learning procedure, especially if it gives equal opportunities to both older and younger learners. Both groups can benefit from each other's knowledge. Both groups must realize that each one of us assimilates only a small percentage of the absolute knowledge, therefore learning never ends. We must also realize that we may acquire more knowledge when we discuss with persons who have the same interests as ourselves either older or younger. On the other hand, intergenerational learning offers the opportunity to the groups of learners of different ages to come closer together, to bridge existing gaps and organize in common learning or other activities.

1. Expected results/Benefits

- more understanding and respect for other(s) age groups
- makes use of resources of the young and old generation
- find resources of new social learning processes between generations
- meets the social challenge of demographic change
- improving communication and interpersonal skills
- working together to achieve change for the better
- enhancement of solidarity between generations
- reducing levels of crime and fear of crime through greater understanding between generations
- improving community cohesion and Sense of Place in neighbourhoods

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- Uniting segregated generations and building better understanding between generations;
- Encouraging active citizenship and social participation;
- Encouraging cross-generational working;
- Sharing societal and professional resources, tacit and explicit knowledge among generations;
- Challenging social problems cross-generationally;
- Addressing different social & e-Inclusion objectives and competence areas simultaneously;
- Supporting Lifelong and Lifewide Learning.
  http://www.epractice.eu/files/documents/workshops/13771-1208261792.pdf

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