Intergenerational Learning and the Contributions of Older People

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Abstract

This paper 1) explains the rationale for a new intergenerational learning paradigm; 2) describes "intergenerational programs," their rationale, definition and outcomes; 3) introduces "social capital," a related intergenerational learning paradigm; 4) identifies and explain characteristics of intergenerational learning programs in the context of selected programs; 5) considers the role of universities in intergenerational learning; and 6) presents ideas related to global implications for intergenerational learning.

Introduction

For centuries, in both traditional and modern cultures, intergenerational learning has been the informal vehicle within families for "systematic transfer of knowledge, skills, competencies, norms and values between generations – and is as old as mankind" (Hoff, 2007). Typically the elders or grandparents of the family share their wisdom and are valued for their role in perpetuating the values, culture and uniqueness of the family. Intergenerational exchange within the family is intended to keep new generations grounded in the history of their culture and to provide a link to the past" (Hanks, 2007). Familial intergenerational learning is informal and involves multi-generational interaction. However, in modern, more complex societies, intergenerational learning is no longer transmitted by the family alone and, increasingly, is occurring outside the family. While traditional families still may value the elder as the transmitter of cultural lore, preparing younger individuals for life in the modern, more complex world has become a function of wider social groups that are non-familial. There is now a new model that is "extrafamilial". It can be of value to clarify how contemporary society has necessitated the creation of a new intergenerational learning paradigm and its future implications.

The Emergence of the New Extrafamilial Paradigm

In the beginning of the last quarter of the 20th century, demographic and social changes contributed to the development of a new extrafamilial intergenerational paradigm. Demographers reported on two phenomena that specifically impact this development: the growing size of the older adult population and a shift in the structure of families. Older adults have been increasing in numbers, and living longer, healthier lives. In response to changing economies, there has been an increase in single-parent and two working-parent families and, often, families relocate to communities that offer more job opportunities. These two phenomena have been most significant in the United States, where demographers report the number of older adults 65–84 in 1980 was 10.3% of the total population and almost 11% in 2000 (an increase of about 31%). Approximately 85% of this population were unemployed and between 40–50% were reported as high-functioning older adults. During this same time period, there have also been changes in nuclear families. With shifts in the economy, the nature of the work force and job availability, the structure of the family has been affected. Of the families with children under 18 the number of two working parents was 17% in 1980 and increased to 33% in 2000. In families with single parents the number of working parents was 33% in 1980 and increased to 49% in 2000. Relocation occurred for many families often to communities 100 or more miles from the elder family members (Federal Interagency Forum, 2007). As a result of these changes, there has been a significant reduction in ongoing familial intergenerational exchange. A growing geographical disconnect has occurred between members of many extended families causing the decrease in opportunities for consistent intergenerational learning and support.

The young and the old have become more vulnerable as a result of this geographic separation. The young experience limited contact with their elder family members who, historically, have been present to support their growth and learning, introduce values and offer wisdom, skills and unqualified love and understanding. Older adults experience limited contact with younger family members who provide contemporary social insights, vitality, unqualified love, support, and new technological skills. Both groups lose the special, dependable support offered by the family member from the opposite end of the life continuum. Concern about the impact of generational separation prompted researchers and practitioners in early childhood, ageing, education and family studies to discuss the need for creating opportunities in which intergenerational learning, meaningful relationships and social and emotional growth could occur between non-biologically connected children, youth and older adults who represented the new population emerg-

ing in suburbs, towns and cities across the U.S (Generations United, 1988; AGHE, 2000).

Intergenerational Programs: A New Intergenerational Learning Paradigm

In the late 1970's, Intergenerational Programs began to emerge as social planning models designed to fill the "geographic gap" by connecting older and younger persons in formal settings that promoted intergenerational exchange and intergenerational learning. The primary challenge of this new paradigm – how to create connections for non-biologically linked old and young people that could promote the social growth, learning and emotional stability that often characterizes relationships between elder and younger family members.

> Intergenerational Programs (IPs) were defined as planned ongoing activities that purposefully bring together different generations to share experiences that are mutually beneficial. Typically, the programs involve interactions that promote social growth and learning between the young and the old.
>
> NCOA, 1981

These programs are grounded in Erik Erikson's life span approach to understanding human growth and development, and an examination of the relationships between developmental stages and their characteristics across the life span (from early childhood though older adulthood). We have learned from Erikson that parallel developmental needs of the young and old result in a unique synergy between these generations (Erikson, 1963). The awareness of this special synergy gave rise to the notion of Intergenerational Programs in which the participating cohorts represented a skipped generation of younger and older persons. Fundamental to the creation of Intergenerational Programs (IPs) was the expectation that the generational synergy evident in familial settings could be captured in social planning models, thereby, creating opportunities for intergenerational learning and the development of meaningful relationships among non-familial older and younger generations.

In the past 30 years, IP models have been developed that engage older and younger persons in "extrafamilial" intergenerational learning experiences. The early models typically occurred in systems that focus on educating the young, such as schools, child care centres, community centres and systems that focus on maintaining the well being of older adults such as residential and long-term care sites. In this paper, to demonstrate the role of the older adults as teacher/learner we will highlight a "school based" intergenerational program model that is representative of the most common model of this paradigm. In this particular program, students ages six through 18 interact with older adults as mentors, tutors, advisers or coaches. Intergenerational learning in these settings is, by design, reciprocal: as students enhance their academic knowledge, social skills and personal growth, older adults learn about

school curricula, increase their understanding of contemporary children and youth, and develop skills to facilitate their roles in supporting the learning and growth of the students.

Outcomes information from the school based program is reported in a multi-year cumulative report by teachers on student changes resulting from weekly intergenerational learning experiences with tutors or mentors and by older adults on their own perceived changes. Teachers in five public schools in Western Pennsylvania reported outcomes for approximately 250 students in grades one through eight who interacted with mentors or tutors throughout the academic year. They described the impact on student growth in seven academic areas and in six areas of students' personal and social development. Positive impact ranged from 83 to 95%. The older adult volunteers also reported positive change of 56% in attitudes toward children and 73% toward public schools, as well as in several areas of well being such as satisfaction with life, interest in children's education and feeling of being needed with positive change ranging from 42–84% (Newman and Latimer, 1996).

Early intergenerational learning initiatives motivated the development of diverse models in the U.S. and in other countries in which social and community systems take more pronounced roles. Diverse models reflect the social, educational and cultural values of the countries in which they are implemented and demonstrate the impact of older adults in the reaffirmation of these values. Their breadth gave rise to a new definition of Intergenerational Programs developed for the "International Consortium for Intergenerational Practice" (ICIP) a global networking voice for intergenerational collaboration: "Intergenerational programs are social vehicles that create purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations that yield individual and social benefits" (International Conference on Intergenerational Programmes, 1999).

Intergenerational learning could arise in any range of contexts in which young people and elderly people come together in a shared activity. It takes place within programs specifically designed to bring together young people and older people in shared meaningful activities when:

- at least two non-adjacent generations learn together about each other (ageing issues, experiences, values, aspirations);
- two different generations learn together about the world, people and/or historical and social events relevant to them;
- two different age groups share learning experiences and training activities designed to develop academic knowledge and skills and prepare their social service skills (such as ecological or peace-related) (Brown and Ohsako, 2003).

Intergenerational programs contribute to achieving the objectives of lifelong and intergenerational learning in four ways:

- lay the foundation for a lifelong culture for young and old;
- develop positive attitudes among generations;
- integrate benefits for children, youth and older adults, school and community;
- share learning activities for all age groups, thus, contribute to social inclusion, social cohesion and solidarity (Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako, 2005).

Social Capital: Another Intergenerational Learning Paradigm

Toward the end of the twentieth century, another social paradigm emerged that has further advanced the notion of synergy between various aspects of a community's social structure. It is derived from, and nurtured in, social contexts in which people are working toward a common goal. Though interpretations of social capital abound, the document prepared by CERI (1999) most closely reflects its relevance to intergenerational learning: "Social Capital consists of those aspects of social life that induce people to act together, while the important products of individual learning with regard to intra-group and inter-group relationships create synergy and provide cohesiveness, trust and solidarity." Intergenerational learning models represent a form of social capital in which the individual resources (the intergenerational learners) are working within a system (school, community government) towards a common community goal. As the intergenerational learning models become more culturally diverse and integrated within the community systems, their connection to the social capital paradigm becomes more evident, demonstrating characteristics compatible with the new paradigm.

Characteristics of Intergenerational Learning Programs: Benefits, Reciprocity, Empowerment

Though the culture, values and infrastructure of communities differ, there are several characteristics associated with intergenerational learning that can provide programmatic cohesiveness and enable global application. These characteristics are evident in virtually all models and their presence helps in determining strategies for maintenance, expansion or replication. Additionally, they provide information related to program viability as we consider implications for networking and opportunities for shared research.

Benefits   of intergenerational learning refer to immediate or long-term positive effects gained from intergenerational learning. They are accrued by both the older and younger learners and may be complementary or shared. Benefits for older learners include: gratification for their contribution to the community and a deeper understanding of the younger generation. For younger learners: increased self-esteem and self confidence, and a deeper understanding of older adults. For both generations: the feeling of being valued, accepted and respected, enhanced knowledge and skills, and the creation of a meaningful, trusting intergenerational relationship.

Reciprocity   within intergenerational learning refers to the exchange of knowledge and skills across generations. For the young learner: a transfer of traditions, values, and culture and life-time skills. For the older learner: a transfer of new values, insights about traditions, changing social structures and new technology. Newman (1997) and Kaplan (2002) stress the importance of intergenerational learning as two-way learning, that is adults-to-children and vice versa. The process is a function of the environment, the structure and goals of the model. As a global concept, intergenerational learning can be adapted to function in multiple societies through a variety of learning strategies.

Empowerment   within intergenerational learning is an intentional ongoing process centered in the local community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of resources gain greater access to these resources (Lawrence, 2006). Empowerment theory is compatible with intergenerational learning and community building (social capital) initiatives. With a growing world interdependence, it is becoming more evident that intergenerational learning as the intergenerational exchange of knowledge and skills can become a vital adaptation strategy for young and old in the knowledge society of the 21st century (Hoff, 2007). Intergenerational learning can provide a foundation for life long learning from a social capital perspective in which various aspects of social life create synergy and provide cohesive trust and solidarity (Bostrom, 2007).

Characteristics Demonstrated in Selected Intergenerational Learning Programs

We examined several diverse intergenerational learning programs that were developed in the last decade in different regions of the world. In the available samples from traditional and modern cultures, the intergenerational learning initiatives involved "skipped generation" programs and reflected concepts illustrative of the Erikson life span approach to understanding human development, and the social capital paradigm that creates a synergy between individuals, groups and systems. The following programs demonstrate that intergenerational learning in widely varied forms is a tool that can integrate traditional and modern methods for exchanging ideas, knowledge, values and skills and create diverse communities in which individuals and systems can collaborate to create sustainable, respectful, and equitable environments. *The description of each program will include a brief narrative summary below with information on table 1 describing how the learning characteristics*

– benefits, reciprocity and empowerment – are represented in these programs.

Canada

A Canadian partnership between the University of Victoria and First Nation Meadow Lake Tribal Council involved the tribal elders in traditional roles of teaching and learning in the training of child care practitioners in first nation communities. The curriculum was based upon what the learners could bring to the curriculum from their culture and values. The elders co-constructed and co-taught the partnership program to post secondary child care practitioners in first nation communities.

South Africa

The Circle of Care – Community support for children affected by HIV/AIDS involved the multi-generational informal family care experience and a formal program experience that involved "skipped generations" of non-biologically linked older and younger persons**.** It is a pilot model developed between 1999–2004 for community capacity building that supports traditional African community values, beliefs and governance structure in reinforcing child resilience through child rights. Circle of Care is an advocacy model that partners children, youth and traditional leaders in activities that focus on learning, collaborating, increasing understanding and implementing participatory research built on the inherent resistance and coping capacity of children, their elders and families.

Australia

The Royal South Street Society in Ballarat offers viable ways for intergenerational learning to become embedded in the community (through participation, support and extended networks). The vehicle is the annual "Eisteddfod" cultural competition that involves youth as competitors and older adults as volunteers. For 11 days, intergenerational learning undergirds the competitive activities in speech, drama and music. There are approximately 8000 competitors ages three through 19 and over 200 older adult mentors, and coaches who are learning together.

Spain

The NUGRAN program at the University of Valencia creates learning experiences that involve older adults and younger students in intergenerational learning programs that aim to promote greater cross generational contact, trust, comfort and knowledge of each group and positive views and attitudes toward each generation. The program began with 71 students in 1999 and currently involves 1000 students. It enables older adults to enrol as university students and to share instruction, research, facilities and resources with younger students. It provides a unique opportunity to promote interaction and communication among the younger and older students. Students at Nu Gran are required to earn 90 credits in a three year period and take courses in a variety of disciplines (Montoro-Rodriguez and Pinazo, 2005).

Sweden

The Granddad Program in Stockholm County Sweden is an intergenerational learning model that involves granddads as volunteers in schools. As male role models in a predominantly adult female environment the granddads aged 55–65 are involved in a variety of tasks. They assist teachers in providing student learning activities in the classroom and help in recreational and social activities in other areas of the school. This Granddad Program represents a form of social capital in the schools in which their work is part of the social capital between individual granddads and the pupils' response to the granddads' presence (Bostrom, 2003).

Japan

"Practical Examples of Productive Aging: Intergenerational Learning and Community Building" is a paper that was presented in January 2006, at the first International Intergenerational Conference in Tokyo. It describes examples of intergenerational interactions, programs and practice in which the university acts as the centre. These examples focused on community building projects highlighting planning and learning between the elderly, university students and children. The projects included a Children's Festival, lectures on community building with university students and older adults, public hall classes and map-making of the town by students and the elderly. The future outlook is promising for village-building through strategically planning intergenerational interaction and learning.

United States

Intergenerational Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh is an intergenerational learning program involving retired engineers mentoring students in day-to-day engineering practice. The mentors, retired between four and ten years, were relearning basic engineering as they introduced the concepts to first year engineering students. Their hands-on approach and practical understanding of the basic engineering principles helped realize two goals of this special engineering intergenerational learning project to increase the retention rate of female students and African American students, and to help foreign students adapt to the American culture as they pursued their engineering careers (Ward and Faux, 1997). This multi-year project became a model for similar programs in other engineering schools.

United States

The Intergenerational Community Action and Youth Empowerment project in Michigan involves empowerment theory in an innovative model for intergenerational community engagement involving undergraduate students and older residents of an assisted living facility. This community Action Program focused on collaboration and exchange of knowledge and learning between the older and younger students engaged in group building and intergenerational learning activities to plan and implement a project to benefit the community.

Table 1: Intergenerational learning programs and their learning characteristics

Country	Benefits	Reciprocity	Empowerment
Canada **Tribal council and University of Victoria**	Elders in traditional roles as men/ women with wisdom and experience to nurture the young and pass on valued knowledge, memories spirituality, skills (Ball *et al*. 2002). Youth overcome misgivings about unfamiliar practice linking wisdom of elders with scripted curriculum from outside the native community.	Young university students learned first nation Salish values, sharing, caring and living in harmony as part of their child care curriculum taught by native elders who were learning the child care scripted curriculum provided by the University.	Two empowerment strategies were available. University faculty met with elders weekly to discuss their questions and comments. Elders and students reflected weekly on the curriculum and teaching methods.
South Africa **Circle of Care**	Children's rights are known and respected by integrating them in discussions with local government and community life. Local governance in partnership with communities form an invisible circle of care around children, youth, elderly and women.	Model partners – children, youth and traditional leaders (elders) collaborate on all activities.	CRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child guided and reinforced the advocacy initiatives of the Circle of Care. Learning and Intergenerational interventions occurred through direct elder/child involvement.
Australia **Royal South Street Society in Ballarat**	Older volunteers facilitate youths' learning by providing encouragement, reinforcing the competitors' artistic skills and enabling the competitors to learn social skills ad confidence. Competitors and volunteers learn together that intrinsic rewards (a sense of achievement, a place in arts and practice, personal learning and aesthetic development) outweighs extrinsic values (winning).	Older volunteers increase their coaching and mentoring skills as they facilitate youths' learning of artistic and social Skills.	Youth and volunteer reflections following each competition reaffirms the goals of "Eisteddfod" enabling the youth to move forward in the competition or to accept with dignity and understanding their level of achievement.
Spain **Nu Gran University of Valencia**	Older adults are co-learners gaining content knowledge and a feeling of self worth from classroom intergenerational Exchange. Younger students enhance social skills, and increase their ability to resolve personal problems.	Older and younger students interact and communicate as peers learning academic content and learning about each other.	Classroom feedback discussion involving faculty and students reinforce young and old co-learners and provide ongoing learning strategies.
Sweden **Granddad Program**	All pupils appreciate the granddad intervention and experience trust though mutual co-operation and communication. Their presence creates a more effective and rewarding learning environment (Bostrom, 2003). Granddads report renewed vitality, new learning, andenjoyment in their school "job".	Effective communication between teachers, granddads, parents and the children creates cohesive functioning networks and demonstrates trust (Bostrom, 2003).	The teaching staff and granddads provide support and help to students when needed. Pupils report high self esteem and enjoyment going to school as an indicator of their *trust*. They feel more secure and *unified* when granddads are present.

Country	Benefits	Reciprocity	Empowerment
Japan **International Intergenerational Conference** .	Youth and elderly gained skills, a sense of accomplishment and pleasure from the cooperative process that results in community building (Saito, 2006)	Planning and learning occurred between the elderly, university students and children involved in the different inter-generational learning and community building projects.	These projects involved collaboration in planning, implementing and ongoing monitoring by the university Faculty, Students, community elders and community planners.
U.S. **Intergenerational Engineering University of Pittsburgh**	Retention of students (female and African American) increased 15% in 3 year pilot; foreign students learned English and developed meaningful and lasting relation-ships with mentors. Mentor retirees renewed skills in engineering and developed friend-ships with faculty and students.	Retired engineers relearned content forgotten in retire-ment and adapted it to new university environment in which they developed mentoring/learning modules for and with graduate students.	Weekly mentor/student review meetings outside of class enabled students to clarify content and prepare for future Material. Bi monthly faculty mentor meetings reinforced strategies and content prepared by mentors that supplemented the faculty lectures.
U.S. **Intergenerational Community Empowerment Project**	Undergraduate students gained knowledge in 3 dimensions of empowerment theory (interpersonal, interactional and behavioral). They learned: leadership, working with authority, group interaction and empower-ment skills. Elders as role models enhanced self esteem by using survival skills.	The project provided opportunities to exchange skills and knowledge and recognize that some intergenerational experiences resulted in the development of similar "empowered" behaviors for the student and the residents.	The project incorporated a Variety of empowerment theory strategies such as reinforce ment, shared behaviors, collaboration, team and leader-ship building and acknow-ledgement of the learning acquired as the 2 groups worked toward a common goal (Lawrence, 2006).

The selection of the intergenerational learning models described in this paper was based on the following crite-ria. The models were to represent diversity in culture, geography, size and settings. They were to reflect both modern and traditional communities, and engage the differ-ent generations in a variety of roles. It was important that benefits, reciprocity and empowerment characteristics were evident by design or by serendipity. We anticipated that the benefits were sustainable and impacted on both age cohorts, that reciprocity was intentional and meaningful, and that an empowerment component was integral to the design and could contribute to the sustainability of the model. In reviewing these eight models, it was notable that six repre-sented collaborations between Universities and the community. This small sample suggests that the future of intergenerational learning programs could be embedded within university/community partnerships that could focus on integration of skills and cultural diversity expressed through communities and universities from a global perspec-tive.

The Role of Universities in Intergenerational Learning

The concept of a society for all ages articulated in the posi-tion papers from the International Year of Older People IYOP (1999), underscores the timeliness for universities and their respective communities to be open to new ways of thinking and grasping opportunities for further advancement of the intergenerational field and to become more engaged in their communities. An "Engaged University" will recognize the importance of "engaging" the older learners and the commu-nity in its academic opportunities. Effective cross generational learning in higher education can promote intergenerational relationships and learning. Formal and informal settings in the "Engaged University" with a new agenda can foster inter-generational learning for older and younger adults together that promotes themes through which older adults can become more productive contributors to their communities.

Such themes include (Seedsman, 2005):

- community development and capacity building;
- cross age mentoring in high schools and within university programs;
- the changing ecology of home, neighbourhood and community;
- the law and relationships between generations;
- intergenerational programs to advance community health and well being;
- multi-generational relationships from a cross- cultural and international perspective.

The "Engaged University" can provide an opportunity to promote and examine intergenerational learning that currently is under-researched and needs to identify best practices as models for replication.

A Global Perspective

Intergenerational learning is emerging as a means for a nation's older adults to make valuable contributions to its children, youth and young adults while enhancing their own learning and growth. It is a concept that includes cross-generational and cross-system partnerships. Intergenerational learning will become even more important in the context of demographic ageing. Interest in this concept is increasing as its relevance is linked to other initiatives that focus on learning as a significant global concern in our changing world.

The European Approaches to Intergenerational Lifelong Learning (EAGLE) report for England 2007 integrates in the diverse lifelong learning initiatives a wide range of intergenerational learning opportunities. They include formal skills exchange, transmission of knowledge and history and activities that promote citizenship and social inclusion. The breadth of this interest is also illustrated by the 900 organizations who are members of the Centre for Intergenerational Practice that embrace the intergenerational learning concept (Hatton-Yeo, 2007).

The UNESCO Institute on Education (UIE) conducted a study of intergenerational programmes for schools promoting international education in developing countries through the International Baccalaureate program. The study noted that intergenerational learning meets three requirement of the UIE lifelong learning program, a major focus of UIE.

- It facilitates cross generational mobilization of learning resources (different learning experiences of young and old and space).
- It makes it possible, through cross generational exchange of experiences, for young and old persons to continue to learn from each others present and past academic and life experiences.
- The importance of accumulating experiences, attitudes, knowledge and wisdom in order to continue to grow and mature throughout life (Brown and Ohsako, 2007).

To reinforce a growing interest and to maintain the future of intergenerational learning as a vehicle to expand cross-generational learning and exchange between our young and old, it may now be time to consider policy changes that recognize this concept and its potential contribution to social interaction and intergenerational solidarity.

In this paper, we have presented examples of intergenerational learning experiences from diverse countries with different age cohorts in different venues. As we conclude this section of the paper, we reaffirm two unifying theoretical constructs that underscore the universality and importance of this 21st century concept. The concept of *individual and group empowerment* is crucial to the successful development of new and changing communities as individuals and groups create new roles and new structures for stabile communities. Linked to individual empowerment is the concept of *a social contract* that will bind the newly empowered to create intergenerational communities based on trust, cohesiveness and solidarity.

Policy Implication

Since the beginning of the 21st century there have been efforts in some European Countries, such as Spain, England, and Germany, to promote intergenerational learning as part of the policy debate. In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing convened in Madrid, addressing the key challenge of building "a society for all ages". The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) recognized the dramatic transformation that has taken place in the world and the profound consequences this has for every aspect of individual, community, national and international life. The MIPAA went on to stress the importance of "strengthening of solidarity through equity and reciprocity between generations" and called for initiatives aimed at promoting mutual, productive exchange and learning between generations, focusing on older people as a societal resource.

The "5th Report on the Situation of Older Generations in Germany2005" stresses in its subtitle "The Potential of the Old Age for Economy and Society" the contribution of older people for the cohesion of generations. It includes a discussion on the benefits of a multigenerational perspective and the profits of knowledge exchange and transfer between the generations. The report recommends fostering further intergenerational practices throughout all formal, non-formal and informal learning activities and encourages policy makers to open new perspectives for civic engagement and intergenerational support in families, private social networks, local communities and neighbourhoods. In England, the Government has recently published both its final review of the Third Sector (2007) and its ten year youth strategy "Aiming High" (2007) in which it has identified the essential role of intergenerational learning and volunteering in addressing social cohesion, raising the achievement and aspirations of young people, developing a flexible, modern workforce and promoting civic engagement and citizenship. In the European Union Grundtvig programme, one identified objective is "effective models on how to make use of the potential of senior citizens to contribute to the learning of others (e.g. retired people as educators and mentors)" (EAGLE European Report, 2007, p.12).

These examples seem to suggest that the growth of inter-generational learning policy initiatives might be limited to the more affluent western nations. However, as we have described in this paper, there is evidence of interest in a variety of intergenerational learning schemes that could be successfully adapted in countries at different levels of economic stability. In principle, the concept seems to be viewed as a "good thing and worth doing" in many of the

ageing societies. If so, what are the factors that must be present to move a "good thing worth doing" as demonstrated by effective programs to a policy reality in many countries that actually promotes and implements realistic and successful schemes? The diversity of effective programmatic initiatives we presented is the result of social, political, and economic factors that were present. There was, in each of the examples we described a social will, community need, political support and economic and social capital resources. In each initiative there was:

- a specific idea that met a community need, and garnered community support;
- an identified, committed leader and supporters;
- a realizable plan and manageable set of goals;
- a funding strategy to complete and possibly sustain the initiative;
- a partnership between fiscal and human capital resources, and an understanding of the implications of the initiative;
- political support from multiple factions.

Conclusion

Because of a potential global interest in the relevance of the intergenerational learning concept, the time is now to consider the overarching universal policy drivers that could promote and implement a framework for this concept across the multiple cultures represented in our global society. Firstly, demographic welfare models have made it essential to rethink the way we think about ageing and older people. The current time has been reinforced as the "baby boomers" age and there is now a global recognition of the need to see older people as learning resources and as assets to their communities. Thereby, policy makers need to provide frameworks that promote the active ageing of their citizens. Secondly, the increasing acknowledgement of the role of life-long and intergenerational learning because of their personal benefits but also to take account of the needs for an ageing workforce to remain engaged longer and to take an active part in supporting young people in work to develop a successful, sustainable economy. Thirdly, the increasing importance of education, for economic success and the concerns over the impact of educational failure in a proportion of younger people, provides a developing role for older people as mentors to

transmit knowledge and provide additional resources to educational systems to raise students' achievement and self esteem. Fourthly, in the changing society that technology and mobility have created it is important that people can ground the future in a sense of the past as in the example of the Salish project discussed earlier. Culture is an essential part of our identity and our elders have an important role in its transmission. Equally, as there are increasingly diverse communities, there is a vital role for the elders in helping intergenerational learning build cross-cultural understanding. Fifthly, intergenerational learning has much to contribute to the policy debate on building communities that have high social capital, as illustrated in the Swedish example, to support the development of communities that place value on civic engagement, volunteering and participation. Older people, by their presence in communities and neighbourhoods have an essential role as educators, leaders and role models and in empowering the young.

Analysis shows that there is a gathering interest by policy makers in intergenerational learning. Indeed, the World Youth Report of the UN, Young People in a Globalizing World (2003) devotes a whole chapter to Intergenerational Relations and concludes:

> Policies and programmes based on an intergenerational approach should promote an essential interdependence among generations and recognize that all members of society have contributions to make and needs to fulfil. While the nature of these contributions and needs may change during the progression from infancy to old age the giving and receiving of resources over time is crucial to promoting intergenerational trust, economic and social stability, and progress.

The challenge now for policy makers is to move from a situation where references to the importance of intergenerational learning and programmes are increasingly transformed to situations where the old are encouraged to be active participants in communities where they live to the benefit of all. We need to harness the energy of universal social will, community need, political support and economic and human resources to move "a good thing worth doing" to a policy reality, that insures a global policy shift that supports intergenerational learning as a vehicle to achieve global intergenerational solidarity.

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