Lifelong Learning Book Series 22

Brian Findsen
Marvin Formosa *Editors*

International Perspectives on Older Adult Education

Research, Policies and Practice

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Lifelong Learning Book Series

Volume 22

Aims & Scope

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Foreword

Lifelong Learning Includes Older People!

For the past 4 years, there have been intense debates about what international community should identify as global development priorities, following the Millennium Development Goals and Education For All (EFA). There is widespread agreement that 'no one should be left behind' and that poverty should be eradicated. There is, too, a consensus that the global education goal post 2015 should include a commitment to lifelong learning – though there are significant differences between the Global EFA Meeting's commitment to 'ensuring equitable and inclusive quality lifelong learning for all by 2030', whilst the Open Working Group of UN member states called only for the promotion of 'lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

At first sight this should augur well for the world's rapidly growing numbers of older people, but as chapter after chapter in this welcome international review of provision for older adults makes clear, there is a gap between the rhetoric of international agreements and the practice on the ground. A few of the countries covered in the study identify the learning needs of older adults as a priority for state action. Where there is a variety of provision, it is characteristically developed by civil society organisations, sometimes backed by state finance. Krasovec and Krump observe in their contribution to this collection that such state support in Slovenia is 'modestly financed, and therefore loosely supervised and superficially evaluated', and the picture they identify is not unique to Slovenia.

This lightness of oversight and regulation has both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, as the studies here testify, there is a rich range of imaginative and innovative practice organised by learners for learners or by adult education organisations – ranging from the success of Universities of the Third Age, men's sheds movements, the Indonesian Silver Colleges or the Maori Kaumatua elders' programmes. There is, too, a significant growth in distance and online learning – from Hong Kong's Radio College for Elders, to the growth of Mass Online Open Courses with global audiences or the online expert patient communities.

On the other hand in education, just like in health and life-expectancy, the poorest adults, those in rural communities and migrant groups, participate at dramatically lower rates than the affluent and those with extended initial education. However, there is nothing inevitable about this. I worked in the 1980s as a Principal in the Inner London Education Authority, which had a policy of charging just £1 for a year for older people to study as many classes as they wanted. 35 % of London 60+ population participated each year – doubtless many coming initially to keep warm, but staying to take an extraordinarily wide range of studies.

ILEA was, alas, closed, along with its older people's programmes, an early victim of national neo-liberal education policies. There is no shortage of neo-liberal policies which prioritise a narrow utilitarianism, focused on labour market needs now. Even when older people's needs are given government priority, as in the impressive South African literacy programme, Kha Ri Gude, it is justified because so many older people have head of family responsibilities in the wake of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is little space in public policy for the realisation of the vision outlined in the Delors report for UNESCO, *The Treasure Within*, which identified four pillars of learning – learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. For older people, it is the last two of these pillars that are the principal focus of learning. As Chui and Zao put it in their chapter, 'The main objective for adult learning is to discover the meaning of experience,' and in the English study of what people learn at different ages we found a significant shift away from vocational concerns from the mid-forties, as older adults took up courses in history, philosophy and religion.

That adults have different priorities at different stages of the life-course is a central tenet of Schuller and Watson's *Learning Through Life.* They argue, albeit in an industrial country context, that there are distinct learning priorities for older adults, roughly 50–75, discovering new roles and a differing balance between work, caring and personal development between broadly 50 and 75, and the distinct needs of older adults, who adjust to more sedentary lives, and to the changing demands of the latest phases of their lives. They also point to the difficulty in making the case for learning to policy makers given the dearth of statistical evidence, and call for surveys of learning to extend beyond the 64-year-old cut-off point common in OECD countries' statistics.

One of the key challenges adult education services face is that they are, on the one hand, modest services at the margins of the institutions or education services, easily overlooked by the large scale needs of primary and secondary schools or of universities; but they are at the same time catalysts for the achievement of development goals across the board. Nowhere is this more true than in considering the welfare of older people. As the UK Foresight study, *Mental Capital and Well-being* concluded, good mental health relies on connecting with others, being active, keeping on learning, fostering curiosity and being generous – all attributes central to the goals of the U3A movement, and of many other initiatives in older people's learning. The global aspirations to end female genital mutilation, to secure clean water and sanitation, to reduce maternal mortality, to secure sustainable development and

to foster global citizenship all rely on young and especially older adults learning, in order to understand, adapt to and to shape the changes that are sought.

As industrial countries face major increases in the size of their older, and very old populations, and longevity increases rapidly in developing countries, too, public policy will increasingly focus on the needs of older people, and organisations like the International Council for the Education of Adults will highlight the positive effects across the spectrum of investing in learning, and making that case will be easier with the evidence contained in this collection of country studies. We must hope that as that case is recognised policy makers will come to understand what so many older learners across the world recognise – that, important though it is, there is more to education and to learning than economic productivity. There is joy and laughter, storytelling, singing and conviviality, debate and dreaming: all tools for a life worth living.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Brian Findsen and Marvin Formosa

1.1 Rationale

In the last two decades the area of older adult education (sometimes labelled 'educational gerontology') has received increased attention across the globe, especially in countries where the older adult population has reached undeniably high proportions. This is far from surprising considering that population ageing is perhaps the most significant trend of the twenty-first century. Suffice to say that around the world, two persons celebrate their sixtieth birthday every second – an annual total of almost 58 million sixtieth birthdays (United Nations Populations Fund and HelpAge 2012). With one in nine persons in the world aged 60 years or over, projected to increase to one in five by 2050 (ibid.), population ageing is a phenomenon that can no longer be ignored. It is also noteworthy that due to the present and projected growing number of older persons in the 'fourth age' (Laslett 1989), the age of greater dependence, community care and nursing home settings are increasingly becoming a key facet of public policy initiatives. It is therefore difficult to overstate how population ageing is contributing to far-reaching changes in the wider social fabric. Education and learning are no exception, and never has the plea for a lifelong educational and learning framework been more urgent.

It is welcome to note that at the turn of the millennium there surged a steady stream of publications addressing features of learning in later life. These ranged

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from policy-linked documents such as *Learning to Grow Older and Bolder* (Carlton and Soulsby 1999), *The impact of learning on health* (Alridge and Lavender 2000), and *Demography and older learners* (Tuckett and McAulay 2005) to academic texts such as *Teaching and learning in later life* (Glendenning 2000), and *Learning in later life: An introduction for educators and carers* (Jarvis 2001), *Older people learning: Myths and realities* (Withnall et al. 2004). These works brought about a better understanding of how learning brings satisfaction in later life. All emphasised how the family, churches, social and sports clubs remain as important sites for learning in later life. Later one witnessed other books that continued to expand such interests. These included *Learning later* (Findsen 2005), *What people learn* (Tuckett and Alridge 2007), *Older people's learning: An action plan* (McNair 2009), and *Choice and opportunity: Learning, wellbeing, and the quality of life for older people* (ibid 2010). The inter-connectedness of learning to other aspects of life shone strongly in these outputs.

Given increasing life expectancies, the imperative for 'active ageing' has become prominent, and the question of how older people find meaning and satisfaction in their lives is now to the forefront at multiple levels – personal, family, societal, governmental and global. Such issues were tackled in *Improving learning in later life* (Withnall 2010), *Active Ageing and Universities: Engaging older learners* (Phillipson and Ogg 2010), *Age is just a number? Rethinking learning across the life course* (Slowey 2008). Older adults are a heterogeneous group leading diversified lives, many of which are beyond the thinking and reality of previous generations. The advent of globalization and accompanying transformations in information and communications technology points to ever-differing life trajectories of ageing populations both within and across nation states. Further, these trajectories are closely connected to geographical location (urban/rural), gender, socio-economic status, health, cultural background, (dis)ability and other factors. These differential patterns of living have been well discussed in publications such as *Education in an ageing society* (Mercken 2004) and *Keeping people active: Continuing education programs that work* (Preece and Findsen 2007).

The 2000s also witnessed an upsurge of critical works that questioned the positive impact of mainstream late-life learning on learners' quality of life. One on hand, critics pointed out that evidence claiming the positive impact of learning on health status is patchy (Withnall 2010). It is claimed that the evidence underlining that those who engage in late-life learning have more positive health outcomes may be the result of the fact that those who do engage have higher-than-average health outcomes (Jarvis 2011). On the other hand, critical educators called for attention to the triumvirate of knowledge, power and control, and asked: Whose interests are really being served? Who controls the learning process? How is quality of life enhanced by education? For example, Formosa (2007) argued that the University of the Third Age in Malta is serving as a strategy for middle-class elders to offset the class-levelling experience resulting from retirement. In the way that books and paintings are used to impress social viewers, membership is employed as a strategy of class 'distinction'. On similar lines, the older adult education movement has been criticised for disregarding the interests of older men, those living in rural areas, ethnic minorities, and frail elders (Formosa 2010, 2012).

In more recent times, publications focused on contemporary issues that were to a large extent left undisturbed in previous years. For instance, *Active Ageing, Active Learning* (Boulton-Lewis and Tam 2012) focuses on the notion of 'active ageing' principally in the Asia-Pacific region, and is an example of a review of work in late-life learning in one specific continental region, and *Learning across generations in Europe: Contemporary issues in older adult education* (Schmidt-Hertha et al. 2014) provides a snapshot of inter-generational learning across the European continent and highlights how intergenerational learning has immense potential to reach new forms of solidarity between younger and older generations. Another emergent strand of literature concerns men's attitudes to and involvement in lifelong and life-wide learning by showcasing evidence from theory and research. For instance, whilst *Men learning through life* (Golding et al. 2014) inform national and international policies and practices related to the learning and wellbeing of adult and older men, *Older men learning in the community: European snapshots* (Kraŝovec and Radovan 2014) acts as a platform to inform the key role that informal contexts have for older men learning.

It follows that while there are instances of insights into a conglomerate of nations' links to lifelong learning and ageing, there has been no example of a more ambitious collection of perspectives and analyses on a global scale. Truly, one finds an impressive output of publications on older adult learning and education. Nevertheless, it is largely restricted to a British and rather Eurocentric conception of the world at a time when globalization is assuming greater importance and there is increasing need for better cross-cultural understanding in a world of rapid social change. As the above books, reports and papers attest, older adult education is changing and developing at a tremendously fast rate. Indeed, the international education scene with respect to older learners has been profoundly transformed in recent times, but its reporting is uneven and largely fragmented. As we underlined half a decade ago,

> It is a challenge to report on the development of older adult learning in Asian, African, and Central and South American continents. It is not that countries in these continents lack older adult learning. Indeed, non-formal and informal learning activities for older persons are truly alive and kicking in these continents. Yet, academic discussions and analysis of programmes' historical development in the English language are hard to locate…the international perspective on the historical development of late-life learning still has to be written, or at best, made globally accessible. We hope that in the coming few years the challenge is taken up and an international handbook on older adult learning is published (Findsen and Formosa 2011, pp. 59–60).

To compound matters, the components of older adult education are increasingly dispersed amongst a vast array of agencies and participants, into a variety of learning contexts, through many various modes of provision and educational approaches, while the number of older adults participating actively is increasing dramatically, especially in 'high-income' countries. For instance, the renowned University of the Third Age has now diversified in five separate models ranging from the west European originated by the late Pierre Vellas, the Anglo-Saxon model practised particularly in the United Kingdom and in most English-speaking countries, the

North American French-speaking model, the South American model, and the Chinese model (Formosa 2014). When one considers that changes are taking place in other third age learning, this international book provides a map, albeit rather fragmentary, for those who wish to find their way through the contemporary world of older adult learning with all its cultural and national variations.

1.2 Focus

This edited volume has brought together this collection of country/regional analyses to assist and support actors and commentators in older adult education to interpret and reconstruct their field. The goal was to construct an edited volume of writings from around the world (balancing 'first', 'second' and 'third' world perspectives) on learning and education issues faced by older adults in different parts of the globe. This has not previously been undertaken, and therefore, presents varied perspectives on what it means to 'age' in different cultural/national contexts and how learning/education intersects with this process. The key objectives are twofold. First, to map and interpret from 'insiders' the character of older adult learning/education in selected countries/regions, and secondly, to seek a concentration on issues related to older adults' learning, an approach that is consistent with a critical gerontological approach. The word combination 'learning/education' is sometimes used in this book rather than the words 'learning' and 'education' separately. While learning tends to be all-pervasive, life-long and life-wide (experienced by people in informal, non-formal and formal contexts), 'education' in this book represents systematic, organized learning where assessment and accreditation may be employed. It is tightly structured, often hierarchical, and usually provided by the state or organizations (which may be public or private). When it is difficult to distinguish between learning and education in a specific instance (where does one start and finish?), the phrase 'learning/education' may be used to capture all possibilities. In some chapters, the emphasis is placed by authors upon education (where government provision and policy development tends to be emphasized) rather than learning or the reverse may be true (where informal learning in community settings tends to be accentuated). It is also the case that a given author may not 'see' the learning by older adults but does observe the structures for education. Hence, across chapters the emphasis varies. Noteworthy, too, is the fact that governments commonly support the use of the phrase 'life-long learning' in their rhetoric as it does not require expenditure from the public purse. On the other hand, 'lifelong education' does necessitate a long-term structure for organized learning and would normally be expected to be funded, in part at least, by the state. The role of governments in providing structures for older adult education (usually as a sub-set of lifelong education) is critiqued in this volume and in most cases the demand is well ahead of supply of funding or other resources.

International perspectives on older adult education is intended to be a country and/or regional-specific account of research, policy and practice of older adult

education – that is, education for learners in later life – that asks the following questions: What is the state of older adult learning/education in your country? Where is the practice of older adult education going? What are the key debates/issues that comprise this area of education practice? This 'international perspectives' volume of 42 individual contributions is written for academics, researchers, practitioners and post-graduate students. To a greater or lesser extent, it delivers a retrospective and prospective overview of older adult learning/education, one that looks at the past, present, as well as the future. In effect, it provides a *map* to the focus question: what defines the nature of older adult learning/education in this part of the world? What signs/indications are there for new directions? It is intended that this book should function as a manual and a resource for practitioners and researchers alike. To provide a guideline on what might be appropriate to include in a chapter for this book, invited authors were made aware of the following framework and to address those aspects most pertinent to their country/region:

- What historical formations have influenced the development of older adults' learning?
- Identify and discuss those significant organizations and persons who have contributed to the growth and development of older adult learning?
- What does older adult learning look like today (its key characteristics, structure and organization, and relevant legislation)?
- What key concepts and/or theoretical perspectives have guided the implementation of older adult learning?
- How has the development of opportunities for older adults been assisted/impeded by the state? In other words, comment on the influence of government policy on older adult learning?
- Which groups in society benefit the most from the existing system and which the least? Explain why.
- What key issues and problems face educators in sustaining older adult education?
- What does the future look like for older people's learning?
- Provide a brief case study of a "successful" initiative in older adults' learning.

It needs to be emphasized that this set of questions (framework) functioned as a guide to authors only; in different socio-cultural contexts, some questions have greater salience than others. It is fair to comment that these questions emerged from a Western way of thinking and reflect the dominance of educational gerontology from Western Europe and North America. Nevertheless, while underlying assumptions may have proven invalid in specific contexts, the framework has given a sense of direction for argumentation in the chapters. No book can possibly represent all viewpoints of older adult learning/education. The selection of authors/countries is based on maximising the effectiveness of understanding the problematics of older adult education cross-culturally and cross-nationally. This book is, therefore, not intended primarily as a comparative analysis. Its aim is much more modest – to provide an academic perspective on older adult learning/education in a wide range of countries in the contemporary world. It is, hence, an exercise in *international*, not

comparative, older adult learning/education. Yet points of comparison will emerge for readers even in terms of what authors have chosen to emphasize or leave out of their accounts.

The intent of *International perspectives on older adult education* is to embrace a wide range of countries and regions of varying ideologies, size and extent of modernization (urbanization/industrialization). The choice of areas from which to seek writers was neither random nor non-random. As editors, we were conscious to gain broad representation from across the globe to elicit diverse perspectives on educational gerontology developments to include countries where modernization is advanced (e.g. the United States of America) or under-developed (e.g. Zimbabwe). We wished to include large countries (or regions) and very small entities. While we were mildly aware of ideological differences in economic systems (capitalist/socialist) and cultural variations, these were not strong driving forces. Instead, given the over-riding desire to encompass diversity, we sought a more pragmatic path in choosing both country and prospective authors. In deciding whom to invite to construct a chapter, we were conscious of the paucity of potential writers in specific countries, especially those with sufficient current knowledge of learning in later life. In reality, we recognized that authors would usually emerge from a background of adult/continuing education (and apply their thinking to the older adult population) or from social gerontology (and apply their thinking to a lifelong learning agenda) or cognate disciplines. As co-editors, we ourselves have relative strengths in lifelong learning and social gerontology and we sought to build on our respective strengths. Prospective authors based on our professional backgrounds, contacts and geographical location were invited to write chapters related to the previously-announced set of questions. While most invitees readily agreed, in some instances we used snowballing techniques to identify suitable candidates when early invitees declined to participate or withdrew belatedly. In some instances, especially for "developing" countries, we anticipated that this would be the first time anyone from that country had attempted to map what counts as knowledge in later life learning/education.

1.3 Structure and Content of the Book

The book contains 42 separate chapters from a country or region. In the case of the UK and of Nordic countries, we decided to seek an overview of that entire region rather than individual chapters. We had to draw the line somewhere even though the reality may have been that other countries in these regions could have produced convincing accounts of their country's trends and issues in later life learning. The breakdown of countries according to continents is as follows: seven from the Americas (North and South); 10 from Africa, nine from Asia, two from Australasia, and 14 from Europe. Hence, the overall total for country/regional accounts is 42. This distribution could not have been decided in advance. Yet, we knew we required, in terms of balance, a fairly wide range of countries per continent. There are some

glaring omissions from the final population of countries (e.g. Egypt) and some of these are explainable from the viewpoint of two Anglophone speakers/writers operating as the co-editors. Despite our efforts to encourage writers from some countries to participate, in the end none eventuated. While the total count of 10 contributions from Africa is to be celebrated, it does not include a participant from North Africa and its selection pattern is rather dependent on authors residing in countries where adult/continuing education historically has been strongest in universities (and, hence, providing author(s) with the necessary academic background to construct a chapter). One must of course acknowledge a tension between standardisation (reliability) and authenticity (validity) in chapters. To the extent that authors adhered to the framework and presented description and analysis under the specific headings/questions, there is the possibility of modest comparability across chapters. However, authors had the right to select whatever was of real significance to the immediate context, illustrating individual distinctiveness. In this case, they chose elements of special significance to "tell their story". We have not endeavoured to reconcile these two divergent patterns emergent from the chapters. Each author was given the freedom to identify what is important to discuss in that context. As a case in point, some authors chose to emphasize the exemplar of a programme illustrating a "successful" initiative with considerable vigour and in some instances undertook original, usually small scale, research on the selected initiative. The exemplar served to illustrate more general trends in later life policy and/or practices. On the other hand, some authors ignored this suggestion and instead focussed more on policy issues affecting provision, taking a more "macro" approach.

Readers of this book may choose to concentrate on regions or continents to gain a fuller appreciation of issues and trends in later life learning for that part of the world. In so doing, they may identify themes which emerge more strongly in one area of the world rather than another. For instance, in the African context, where the urban/rural divide is especially pronounced and poverty is widespread, the relative inability of government policies to filter down to the village level is quite stark. Government policy is virtually absent; where it does exist, it is concentrated on the younger generations where the population is more plentiful. Equally, in the Asian environment, where proportionately there are greater numbers of older people in several countries (e.g. Japan), in so-called "aged societies", the socio-cultural context is such that social protectionist policies are very important, especially for the "old-old" in societies. While it is still more the norm than the exception that younger generations will protect their elders under a regime of filial piety, there is active contestation of this trend. Governments tend to provide a safety net beyond the family, in part from recognising that traditional values of reciprocity across generations have been severely challenged.

Other readers may choose to select chapters using a different lens – the chapters are presented in alphabetical order for ease of identification. For example, an analysis based on relative size of a country may prove instructive, as exemplified by the inclusion of two very small countries, Lesotho and Malta. However, the country known as South Korea to many external observers is known officially as the Republic of Korea in diplomatic circles. From within the country, the title "Korea" is

commonly used. While the chapter title is under the official name (Republic of Korea), we as editors have honoured the preference of these authors to use the name "Korea" throughout their chapter. Hong Kong, though technically part of mainland China, is presented as a separate entity; so, too, is Taiwan. Overall, many countries in Asia, as exemplified in this book, are addressing the ageing population issue with considerable force and later life learning opportunities are increasing as a consequence as governments have taken the issue of an ageing population seriously.

Finally, one must recognise that for some authors, their contribution to this book has been exercised in challenging circumstances where civil war and/or the spread of disease have been potential barriers to overcome. In some ideological contexts, content may be cautiously presented to avoid possible recourse from authorities, particularly in presenting historical societal trends and their impact on access to education. We appreciate the special efforts made by such authors to participate in this edited volume. Overall, this book provides readers with a wide range of perspectives on later life learning/education covering the full spectrum of countries where governments have engaged seriously to those that are yet to embrace lifelong learning as a driver of policy or funding. It is important to incorporate a full appreciation of learning in later life from formal to non-formal to informal opportunities in specific countries/regions and to recognize that increasingly even the most recalcitrant countries will feel pressure to develop favourable learning conditions for people to better enjoy learning in later life.

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Chapter 2
Argentina

José Alberto Yuni and Claudio Ariel Urbano

2.1 Introduction

Argentina's levels of ageing population are of the highest in Latin America (CEPAL 2009). Demographic transition began in the 1970s that along with other internal migration processes, generated the paradoxical situation, in the big urbanized areas, of highly inhabited by older adults, while in the rural areas the migration of young people caused the aging of the social structure. The heterogeneity and diversity of the "national situation" is a mosaic of educational experiences of diverse nature, intentions, purposes and recipients that hinders a description and understanding of the specific modes involving the praxis of older adults' education (Yuni 2011).

The first part of the chapter is a characterization of the institutionalization and development dynamics of different circuits in the last few decades. The second section deals with those aspects that define the theoretical-practical construction underlying the praxis in education of older adults. The third section considers some problematic issues affecting the sustainability of older adults' educational experiences in the country. Finally, the last section describes the challenges signaling the future in organizational, methodological and gerontagogical terms.

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2.2 Organizational Models in Older Adults Education in Argentina

OA's education in Argentina recognizes a socio-institutional process of several decades, during which various circuits were made, that answers to different gerontagogical, organizational, and curricular logic (Yuni and Urbano 2008a, b). This section includes a description of these circuits, as well as the conditions of its institutionalization, organizational logic, the approach taken in relation to OAs, and its impact in terms of coverage. The second part considers updated organizational tendencies produced during the last two decades.

2.2.1 The Institutionalization of Older Adult Education

Institutionalization of older adults' education started in the 1980s (Yuni and Urbano 2006a, b) as a result of the convergence of multiple socio-political factors (Zolotow 2004). But the return to democracy in 1983 meant the revitalization of the Reform principles in the universities[1] (Rodríguez 2009). The creation of the Department of Middle and Third Age in the National University of Entre Ríos in 1984 is considered as the landmark in older adult education in Argentina. Its creation renewed universities' social commitment through extension service (Yuni 2006, 2003). University programmes later created followed the organizational, educational, and methodological lines chosen by the aforementioned university.

Nowadays, of the 47 public universities, 24 develop programmes for older adults. Among the main features of the Argentine model for older adults,[2] the following stand out. First, its ideological bases answer to the Latin American conception of university extension service to the community, which in practice gave birth to an "emergent" conception of specific teaching-learning criteria for older adults (Ruiz et al. 2008). Its organizational mode is conceived as an articulate, systematic, and systemic group of teaching, research and extension activities. A well-known and generic name for present programmes is *Programa Universitario para Adultos Mayores* (PUAM) (University Programme for Older Adults). In order to fulfill its aims, PUAM's actions are based upon the viewpoint of education as a transmitting, forming, and humanizing process (Urbano 2010). Secondly, the curricular selection considers teachers' academic profile (mostly university teachers), emphasizes the

[1] The University Reform of 1918 was a socio-political movement of students started at the University of Córdoba. The Reform proposed an institution committed to social issues and groups. This movement extended all through Latin America and succeeded in defining the mission of the public university.

[2] Programmes or University Programmes are so called because university legislation in Argentina does not allow certain activities to take the name of Universities for Older People or Universities of the Third Age as is in other countries, that is why, activities are generically called Education for Older People.

transmission of high-quality scientific contents, and the articulation with research work and processes not only in the older adults' classroom but also with research projects in the university (Petriz 2003). All university programmes in Argentina are based on the concept of 'open curriculum' (Yuni 2009), thus offering a wide range of options to each participant. The acquisition of specific knowledge deserves granting certificates to attendants. In spite of the curriculum openness and flexibility, programmes are structured into levels and different fields of knowledge. Activities offered by PUAM are realized through semesters or yearly courses, which aim at specific specialization and the achievement of higher competence. The Argentine model differentiates from the French or the English ones, because it systematizes the distribution of knowledge and certifies its levels. And finally, methodological-didactic strategies emphasise active, participative, and productive approaches for the aged. This is the result of the Latin American extension service tradition and the influence of new trends in the field (Rodríguez 1997). University programmes foster an inter-generational approach by including, as participants, people older than 50 and even older than 35 years old. As regards teachers, they are often young graduates or senior university students. These programmes also offer professional practice in gerontological issues by systematizing the experience through research (Yuni 2000; Yuni and Urbano 2008a, b). Various universities foster education for volunteer work or community project production including older adults' knowledge transference (Yuni 2010).

2.2.2 Open Universities for the Third Age

Another non-formal educational circuit for older adults, started in 1993 is that of *Universidad Abierta para la Tercera Edad* (UATE) (Open Universities for the Third Age). Nowadays, there are seven institutions. It was originally created by the Uruguayan teacher Alondra Bayley, who was inspired by Freire's pedagogy on participative didactic and curricular strategies (Cruz and Pérez 2006). There are more than 100 Latin American organization members grouped under *Red de Universidades Abiertas* (RUA) (Network of Open Universities) (Red UTE 2008). Generally, these organizations are present in little towns in the central region of the country increasing educational possibilities for older adults who self-manages them. Institutionally, UATEs belong to cooperatives or civil society organizations. They take the name of Universities because they intend to foster the experiential knowledge obtained in the 'University of Life'; in the same way, UATEs sustain the ternary conception of life in terms of the Third Age.

The open curriculum approach is a good choice for older adults since they can choose courses according to their interests. The UATE circuit includes a wide range of issues from formative activities to scientific ones. Many older adults of middle to high income, generally professionals, lead the construction of an educational space that allows them to be socially visible. Thus, the functioning logic is built around an experience of socialization among peers, with a low inter-generational interaction.

2.2.3 *Universities for the Integrated Older Adults*

Agreements made among public, private universities and PAMI created in 2008, a new programme called UPAMI[3] (Universities for the Integrated Older Adults). According to this arrangement older adults can start non-formal education actions, in that it is different in its conception and scope to traditional university programmes for the older adults previously mentioned.

The name UPAMI conveys the idea underlying the proposal. The term 'programme' refers to the action of a financing institution, external to universities. Universities become beneficiaries of the programme offering a free educational service aimed at the social integration of PAMI members. The preposition 'for older adults' in the name of the initiative reveals the gerontagogical position of the programme as it places older adults as recipients or users of the proposal (Yuni 2000). But on the whole, institutional discourse connotes a social service assisting vision (Orte 2006; Yuni 2000).

The notions of active ageing and lifelong learning are embedded in the UPAMI programme institutional discourse, as a basis for its proposal. Although the programme has a national scope and intends to cover the whole territory through agreements with public and private universities, it lacks the necessary structure to carry on educational activities, or its programmatic, methodological or didactic orientation (Yuni 2011) These experiences, thus, cannot be considered as university programme for older adults (PUAM), they have to be thought of as non-formal educational activities the universities offer for the aged. The UPAMI programme also follows the flexible and open curriculum, easily adaptable for each university's features. A common element in the curricular offer along the country is the presence of four kinds of courses: digital literacy, memory stimulation, rights and citizenship, and life quality. Quantitatively, the impact of this programme can be determined by the rapid expansion of the universities, including private ones, offering activities for OAs, and their growth in number all over the country. Then, of the 47 public universities, 35 participate of the programme through 67 headquarters. Of the 49 private universities, 15 have joined UPAMI. Only in the first semester of 2013, UPAMI presented 2001 courses, aimed at a population of 32.303 older adults. During the last 5 years 5.877 courses have been offered, with the participation of 90,320 people. Thus, UPAMI programme findings takes an action of social politics strengthening universities as non-formal OA education providers.

[3] The National Institute of Social Services for the Retired People was created (INSSJP is the acronym in Spanish, henceforth known as PAMI). This organism is responsible for the administration of social security for the retired people and it is to this day the largest organization in Latin America for direct socio-sanitary attention, having 4,450,000 members.

2.2.4 *Reconfiguring Tendencies in Older Adults' Education*

Non-formal education for older adults in Argentina constitutes a heterogeneous field which developed marginally for the last three decades and without the support of public policies, especially those with an educational background. But transformations and socio-political processes reconfigured the scope of older adults education.

The 1990s were characterized by the imposition in all Latin America of a neoliberal logic of efficiency in the universities (Puiggrós 1994). Thus, the reduction of the state financing funds forced universities to generate their own resources through service provision and the extension or transference to social sectors with a certain income. From the beginning PUAMs lacked any kind of financing help from university budgets, and they have never had any federal or provincial contribution either. Therefore, neoliberal policies led them to the search of possible clients and consumers of the community services they provided. This led to incorporate courses for older adults into the curricular offer. Thus, contents were reoriented from an academic approach towards an offer with elitist proposals, 'fashionable' or 'in-vogue' courses. Fee payment by attendants to courses allows PUAMs to finance educational service. This process brought about an ideological displacement. Neoliberalism considered (mainly university managers) that older adults education is a merchandise to be sold to those with a certain purchasing power who might grant social prestige. The social crisis generated by the economic model increased educational needs of older adults, and consequently, their population in universities. The situation changed the logic of the Argentine PUAMs: (1) some programmes sustain the notion of education as a right and social goods, and (2) there are university programmes which view OAs' education as the distribution of some educational products.

Public policies opposite to the 1990s neoliberal model led the government, which took office in 2003, to give strong support to the universities in order to back up educational actions with OAs. Through financing specific projects, PUAMs were stimulated to develop educational activities with low class or socially vulnerable OAs, at the same time fostering the creation of volunteer and inter-generational projects. The new National Education Act (passed in 2006) furthered a conception of inclusive public and social politics. Although this act does not acknowledge OAs' education as a subfield it does include the aged as the recipients of the modality and lifelong learning as an educational principle of the actions generated in its domain (Yuni and Urbano 2014). OAs is explicitly mentioned in the text as those educational subjects who the right to basic education. This Act defends the right to education of that 6 % of the population older than 60 who did not attend school, and of that 29.5 % who did not finish primary school or could not complete basic education. Recently, the educational private market has also answered to middle- and upper-class older adults' demands for cultural goods by offering courses. Along with this outburst, city's municipalities also offer recreational and educational activities for the aged.

Finally, the dynamics of socio-political processes of the last two decades saw a variety of proposals and organizational models that led to the growth of offers. Though there are socio-cultural segmentations, differences by social origin, and educational needs.

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives Orienting Argentina's Older Adult Education

Institutional development of older adult education in Argentina has been designed through different circuits sustaining various organizational modalities. Nevertheless, certain approaches and conceptions observed reveal some theoretical continuum in dealing with the practices. Older adult education is characterized by different ideological orientations, articulating certain political values with diverse gerontological traditions (Yuni and Urbano 2005). Thus, nominal differences existing among the terms 'education of older adults', 'education for older adults', 'education with older adults' and 'education among older adults' unveil different modes of thinking and performing this praxis (Hübner 1998; Lirio et al. 2008). These ideological orientations are expressed in the institutional rationality, the meanings that are present in the organization and how power, authority, and participation are built. The expression 'institutional rationality' refers to the articulation of practices with the institutional vision on old age, aging and lifelong education. The Argentine case shows how the institutional vision sustains a group of representations, discourses and practices about aging. It allows them to show capacities as well as new acquisitions and realizations. Then, discourses in educational institutions of older adults hold a positive view of aging, characterized by a number of markers, such as:

Productivity is considered as an eminently human capacity of creation, production and transformation of themselves and the environment. Thus, they can perceive the sense of their contribution to the community, they belong to. The bases of active, healthy, and successful aging are competence (that is, the capacity for adaptation and social performance), autonomy, and effective decision taking. Institutional discourses of education and lifelong learning imply the potential role of transforming people, institutions and society. This viewpoint contains several components. Primarily, that education is a socio-cultural tool through which a lifelong humanization process is favored. The education of older adults allows them to approach other dimensions of personal development. Education aims at widening their representational universe through educational *dispositifs* (Urbano and Yuni 2013a, b). As spaces of institutional circulation, production, and reproduction show a constant exchange between knowledge and skills of different kinds among generations, and among various subjects with different visions and knowledge about the world and about being-in-the-world. Knowledge is, thus, the subjective and inter-subjective means and the basis on which the human action over the internal and social worlds is structured. Therefore, these *dispositifs* consider older adults as builders of socially

meaningful knowledge. Furthermore, that education is a right that must be accessible throughout life. Therefore, educational institutions become responsible for creating opportunities involving older adults themselves in activities backed up by the philosophy of lifelong learning and intergenerational education. The notion of *dispositif* for older adults is seen as the fulfillment of this right, so, it becomes a sort of compensatory inter-generation circle by which: (a) it satisfies older adults' cultural needs; (b) it answers their educational demands; (c) they contribute to their support through their work and tax payment. And irrevocably, non-formal educational dispositions foster older adults' creative and productive energies. Participation at an advanced age can become a "transforming experience", since it contributes to identity re-signification of OAs in their social dimension (Urbano 2010). Therefore, education favours change in the subjective and personal dimension that influences on the older adults' social identity.

Generally, older adults' education experiences in Argentina emphasize the role that education has on empowering and learning new social roles or the re-signification of traditional ones (Yuni 1996). These experiences move older adults' to participate in different actions and projects in which their productivity and social influence needs are materialized (Yuni and Urbano 2010). This institutional generative dimension is related to the following aspects. First, institutional discourses emphasize the potential for older adults' social contribution as a social group; thus, they find a space for experimentation and exercise of new social roles and participative and collaborative practices. For contemporary generations of older adults it implies the learning of new relationship modes, because their social participation was shaped by socio-political processes of authoritarian quality, in the context of a chauvinist culture. Secondly, these institutions advocate the basic belief that the human species has the innate capacity of conquering the best of themselves through creation, upbringing and self-caring. Educational *dispositifs* provide a set of representations which uphold one of the conditions of generativity proposed by Erikson (Urbano and Yuni 2005), the basic belief in humans. It shows older adults their capacity of transforming others and themselves. Educational institutions acknowledge older adults as potential participants in this socially creating task by following their own strategies, which range from socio-cultural practices to the construction of meaningful networks and exchanges.

Third, institutions involve the aged in activities in which they renew their interest and commitment with the welfare of future generations and their own. Educational activities represent a powerful stimulus in older adults' daily lives; these may cover a wide range of social problems affecting the most vulnerable social groups. Besides, the efficiency of the educational *dispositifs* contributes to the building of a more complex, holistic and integral conception of human life and its conditioning factors. Thus, institutions establish a dialectics in which older adults satisfy their need for acknowledgement, integration and social contribution by answering the needs of their fellow men. Consequently, daily activities become meaningful. And finally, institutional discourses and practices sustain the generativity of the participants in two key ways. They appeal to the capacity of older adults to influence their environments by channeling their generative aspects, thus reinforcing the value of

their social contribution (Kotre 2006). Then, vulnerable groups can be benefited by the older adults' capacities and constructive energy. Meanwhile, older adults increase self-esteem by being useful to others, in this way they overcome social segregation and isolation.

2.3.1 Case Study: Older Adult Education Programme in the National University of Río Cuarto

This section deals with a case of good institutional practices in non-formal older adult education *dispositif*. 'Good' institutional practices mean those which, in the structuring of projects and activities, articulate the agency and community dimension of generativity (Erikson and Erikson 2000). The last decade saw the deepening of some aspects of universities' organizational beliefs on the relationship between education and active, participative aging. They created a curriculum inspired on the thinking of older adults as subjects and agents of cultural participation and social transformation. The object of our discussion is PUAMs because, in their orientation, they held and defended education as a person's right and public social goods. It is an open and flexible curriculum that allows older adults to migrate from one course to another, as they progress in a specific field; nowadays they are trying other alternative and complementary courses.

The case chosen is a non-formal education programme in a public university of the interior of the country. It is organized by the National University of Río Cuarto (Córdoba): the Older Adult Education Programme (*Programa Educativo de Adultos Mayores,* PEAM) has been working for 22 years. There are 1300 members, distributed in different courses inspired in the Permanent Education model. It offers more than 70 courses related to a wide range of issues. Courses are taught not only at the university campus, but also in various social institutions. All activities are free of charge for older adults and financed by the university budget. The Student Centre allows the integration of the participants into different management roles and the planning of academic and community transference activities. Once the participants complete the different levels of a course, they can choose another thematic field or engage in another programme option, called "management units". This organizational *dispositif* is structured as a space of self-management, production and transference of the previously acquired knowledge. Older adult students who, after acquiring the theoretical and/or practical foundations of a field of knowledge, wish to deepen their study into it can apply that knowledge into a social intervention project – that is, by putting different types of productivity into work they can become part of a management unit.

Each management unit is supported by a host, who contributes to holding group dynamics and steering the group's energies to the attainment of various activities the group has chosen beforehand. A similar organizational sequence can be observed in every unit: (a) participative planning; (b) developing the project's activities; (c)

socializing the actions; and (d) participative assessment of the actions with their recipients and with the programme members. The aim of management units is the production of socio-cultural goods, staging shows, holding exhibitions presenting the group's research process, engaging in intergenerational educational projects, participating in community projects of social development, and educational and recreational assistance to other organizations of older adults, such as: retirement centers. Their common feature is the engagement of older adults in activities fostering their inclusion and participation, and the use of their background knowledge acquired from courses and workshops. Thus, the older adult educational position is redefined: it runs from the traditional student position to a more active and autonomous, of knowledge co-production and a co-management position that allows their participation and insertion in different projects, exercising new social roles through service-learning (Yuni 2010). These experiences represent a new conception of learning as personal and social transformation, along with education as a process of re-creation, and production of socially meaningful knowledge.

2.3.2 Problematic Issues Affecting the Sustainability of Older Adult Education

Argentine experiences of non-formal older adult education face many limitations, i.e. external funding, whose dependence is likely to affect the sustainability of OAs education. Many organizations finance their actions through the contribution of the aged themselves or through external state subsidies. However, UPAMI undergoes greater dependence since it covers its overall functioning. Since activities and courses are paid, a social selection of demands for non-formal older adult education is made; most of them belong to middle and high classes. It seems, then, that older adults' educational activities answer to the needs and hopes of groups of best socio-economic and educational position, with a lifestyle related to studying and intellectual activity.

Institutional level undergoes a relative degree of autonomy in the management of older adults' activities. In the case of the PUAM, its influence is felt on the different areas that are conducted by management teams designated by school governing areas or by the rector's office. As far as the UPAMI programme, management is shared by university and local authorities in charge of the social service organization (PAMI). Academic management is led by universities, but the financing, organizational and operational leadership is shared by both institutions. A further difficulty is seen in the adaptation of offers to local contexts and each university's particular features.

Older adults' involvement in the educational management renders good institutional practices (Formosa 2005; Yuni 2010b). But Argentine university experiences are influenced by the difficulties of political socialization that contemporary generations of older adults have (Yuni 1997). Nevertheless, PUAM has been trying to

involve older adults in co-managing Student Centers, Students' Associations and/or Commissions. Though UATEs are characterized by their self-management, older adults have low participation, decisions are made by the commissions who organize these experiences. Meanwhile, in UPAMI universities, these developments are not yet noticed, as the institutional logic characterizes older adults as beneficiaries of options provided by the social service. Finally, the question of the technical, professional and academic profile of the teachers hosting older adults' education experiences is an issue that has not been properly considered in our country (Yuni and Urbano 2008a, b). Sometimes, universities are short of teachers, in their staff, for some specific areas or subjects, so they have to recruit them from outside the institution. Whereas in UATE, hosts of courses or workshops are usually retired secondary school teachers or professionals who are related to the courses' subjects. As to the hosts and teachers' training, they have low background in gerontological issues.

2.4 Future Challenges

One of the main challenges, faced by educational experiences in Argentina, is to keep older adults' identity features as formative activities oriented to personal development. They are often based on intergenerational interaction, social integration, and participants' contribution.

The challenge for universities is the preservation of academic quality on scientific grounds, articulated with the production of knowledge on aged and aging and its transference to the community. Therefore, a further objective for the future is to keep the condition of a proper university educational activity. Institutional identity is questioned as a dynamic process that is continuously reconstructed and redefined. Besides, educational experiences with older adults have contributed to the formation of the Argentine gerontagogical tradition during over 25 years. Systematization of experiences and model are also part of the nature of institutional responses to contextual demands of OAs' education.

A comparative institutional evaluation indicates that, from a gerontagogical perspective, all involved sectors should advance in the formulation of a set of basic criteria promoting the design, development, and execution of systematic and integral educational actions. Agreements made between institutions may strengthen experiences as well as the sustainability of medium and long term programmes.

Besides, educational experiences with older adults in Argentina will have to face further challenges required by quantitative and qualitative changes of the aging population. As life expectancy increases, particularly in urbanized areas, opportunity expansions and education access will require continuous actions in revising and re-evaluating educational offers. Socio-cultural diversity and older adults' life conditions require educational institutions a re-evaluation of the relevance of activities and strategies devised. Though models satisfy educational demands of the middle class, older adults' alphabetization and job training are not being carefully considered. Future requirements from universities include: (i) older adult's need of

accessing professional and technical careers, not only to extension courses; and (ii), the development of educational alternatives based on updated information, e-learning, and an integration into this digital revolution. Another challenge is to face the diversification of educational offers recognizing heterogeneity and diversity of older adults and their life conditions. Courses generally have a female bias, since over 90 % of students are women – thus, it is necessary to design alternatives addressed to men.

Political-educational orientation of university experiences with older adults, also face challenges, mainly defending the essence of older adults as active and productive subjects. Older adults' education is given full possibilities of intellectual growth as agents of social change and transformation. Teachers' training is very important to conduct older adults' educational activities; it is necessary, then, to find the adequate profile of qualification. Besides, an educational gerontology programme could be designed for those in charge of courses and workshops to strengthen interinstitutional networks. Finally, the production of scientific knowledge gained by these experiences must be urgently systematized. It is crucial to overcome the lack of systematic and reliable information, because this drawback makes it difficult to reconstruct the national experiences.

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Chapter 3
Australia

Barry Golding and Helen Kimberley

In the later years of life in Australia, after commitment to paid work or family responsibilities declines as life's primary motivating factors, learning occupies a different life space and purpose from learning in previous life stages. While learning to cope with the expected and unexpected events in later life is known from research elsewhere to be increasingly important (Cooper et al. 2010; Schuller and Watson 2009), the opportunities and places in Australia to learn formally and informally have been decreasing (Golding and Foley 2011). Our chapter argues that spaces for and purposes of older adult learning are less reflected upon, both by older adults themselves, by the wider Australian society and particularly by policy makers and governments in Australia. The prevailing discourse is more about costs of caring than opportunities during ageing.

Learning in later life in Australia is certainly less well researched and understood in comparison with the magnitude and urgency of the contemporary research effort directed toward learning during childhood, youth and the working years. This reflects in part government obsession with productivity, predominantly economically defined, but also prevailing social attitudes to ageing and the stereotypical but outmoded notion about decline and deficit in later life. Perhaps we should not be surprised then that policy and resources for later life learning are scarce and fall almost entirely outside the purview of government education policy. The single exception was the small Productive Ageing through Community Education Program established in 2012 but abolished in November 2013 by the new Coalition

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Government together with the Advisory Panel on Positive Ageing. Even the newly released *Blueprint for an Ageing Australia* contains no reference to later life learning (Percapita 2014).

Golding and Foley (2011) summarised the recent and ongoing neglect and potential of adult and community education (ACE) in the Australian community, highlighting the 'lack of ACE funding and in turn ACE provision for members of the community that are its most vulnerable' (p. 66). This section of the community includes older and Indigenous Australians as well as migrants and refugees for whom English is a second language. With population ageing, particularly in rural and regional communities, and age discrimination, it also includes a significant number of older people withdrawn from the workforce as well as retirees older than age 65.

The government has complained loudly about the cost of *Caring for Older Australians* (Productivity Commission 2011, 2013) and the risk of older people 'crippling the Australian economy' (*The Australian*, 22 Nov 2013). While it has factored in an increase in the Australian retirement age to 67 years, it has been silent about the many known benefits and opportunities for 'helping older people maintain the best possible mental capital, and so preserve their independence and wellbeing, both for their own benefit, and also to minimise the need for support' (Kirkwood et al. 2010, p. 7). What our chapter highlights, best exemplified by the Australian (and now international) community men's shed movement (Golding et al. 2007; Flood and Blair 2013), is the other challenge of ensuring 'that the considerable resource which older people offer … is recognised and valued by society' (Kirkwood et al. 2010, p. 8).

The term 'later life' is a tenuous and contentious concept of the stage of life that succeeds middle age, whenever that might be. Instrumentally, entry to later life is usually determined by governments as the age of entitlement to or exclusion from various financial supports and services, such as the Australian Age Pension available currently at age 65. Beyond this there is a diversity of views and no clear agreement about the chronological age at which later life begins. With growing expectations of living a further 20–40 years beyond one's working life, what is incontrovertible is that later life in Australia often encompasses the equivalent of two generations and that older adults now have to contend for much longer with living in a world in which complexity and turbulence have come to equal steady state. While this presents challenges for all older adults, it is particularly problematic for those who are disadvantaged, especially by social isolation.

There is need to reflect more deeply on learning in later life in Australia to raise its value and enhance its legitimacy. To this end, we first scrutinise a number of key ideas. What is the role of the many forms of learning in later life? What gives meaning to older adults' lives? What is the later life project, individually and communally? From there we can start to explore how and in what contexts learning adds value to the lives of older Australian adults (their human capital), as well as to the communities and the society they live in (their social and economic capital).

3.1 Who Are Australia's Older Adult Learners?

While some older Australian adults, usually the more affluent and better educated, may seek learning opportunities for their intrinsic value, consciously 'improving their minds', protecting themselves from cognitive decline or seeking self-actualisation through education programmes such as continuing education in universities, U3A or other adult education providers, it appears that overall, very small numbers participate in learning programmes. Data from the 2006 Australian Census indicate that the number of adults aged over 55 who participated in formal or informal learning in 2006 was very small (48,175 or 1 %) (Kimberley and Simons 2009, p. 14).

However, evidence from data is inconclusive, in part because of insufficient interest from policy makers in even surveying participation in adult education after the age of 64. For example, the first national survey in Australia to include informal learning sought responses from all persons in the age range 15–64 but included those age 65–74 only if they were participating in the workforce (ABS 2009). While U3A has a high profile among policy analysts, the plethora of programmes offered by the many hundreds of adult education centres, community colleges and neighbourhood houses and learning centres, and the 1000 men's sheds across Australia, is largely ignored.

On this narrowly defined 'adult learning' evidence, one might assume that very few older Australians participate in adult learning. If, however, adult learning is conceptualised less narrowly, data shows that over 1.5 million community-dwelling Australian adults aged 65 years and over (66 %) were actively involved in a social or support group in the 12 months before the 2006 General Social Survey, although the proportion declines with age to 43 % of people aged 85 and over (AIHW 2013, pp. 31–32).

3.2 What Motivates Older Adults to Learn?

Later life is qualitatively and quantitatively different from the parts of life that have preceded it. In examining how age shapes our internal imagination, Biggs and Lowenstein (2011) argue that with age comes a shift in centrality of concerns; from social achievement and acceptance, for example, to more existential matters like personal coherence and completeness (such as time, health, death, impermanence, contingency, finitude). This reflects Jung's distinction between the existential projects of the first and second halves of life (Biggs and Lowenstein 2011, p. 25) and the structural models of human development theorists such as Erikson (1959), Maslow (1954), and Kohlberg (1981), all of whom postulate a stage of self-actualisation in one form or another. More recently, Tornstam (2005) has argued that the shifts of perspective in the later life project enable gero-transcendence.

Later life then embodies a quest for meaning which suggests that adults continue to develop throughout the whole of life. Learning does not suddenly stop before life ends. As Carr et al. (2013) found in their recent study of the meanings of a long life, older adults speak of feeling young inside, about desire and aspiration, and about growth and development and the future, their own and that of others (Carr et al. 2013, p. 15).

> … counter-narratives, narratives that tell a different story about older age than what we are used to. Such stories counter the stereotype of inactive older adults ruminating about the past. They suggest also that older adults think about the future, their own and that of others.

3.3 What Do Older Adults Want to Learn?

If these ideas help to explain perceptions of later life and its projects, it must not be forgotten that it is the practical experience of living from day to day that provides the opportunities to survive, learn and flourish in life. The capabilities approach of Sen (1999) is concerned to understand quality of life on the basis of multidimensional variables rather than the economic measures traditionally used to measure disadvantage and poverty. Premised on the notion that adults have the right to live a life they have reason to value, Sen argues that they should have the capabilities to be and do what for them will constitute such a life, and that societal institutions should ensure the availability of these opportunities (Sen 1999, p. 293).

In this context, a recent survey of users of Brotherhood of St Laurence aged services asked what they value in life. The most highly valued capabilities nominated by respondents were led by health, safety and 'making my own decisions' followed closely by 'being well informed, the place where I live, my independence, my family and feeling respected' (Kimberley et al. 2012, p. 26). These Australian findings are consistent with Field's findings that adults 'value their health, their social connections (including family) and their ability to contribute to the wider community' (Field 2009, p. 5) as well as their freedom and ability to shape their own destinies (agency) and have implications for older adults' wellbeing and their learning concerns.

Fundamental to these concerns is the possession of 'knowhow', the knowledge and practical skills for its application. To flourish in contemporary society adults need to understand the institutions of society, their systems and processes, that impact directly or indirectly on their lives both day-to-day and in the longer term. In Australia the levels of competence needed in the basic literacies, prose, document, problem-solving and health are very low among most older adults (OECD 1997) as are financial and digital knowhow. These denote poor prospects for their ability to manage the complexity inherent in sustaining their human rights, their health and wellbeing, their financial affairs, their social connections, their civic responsibilities,

their communication tools, their accommodation needs, and their currency with evolving technologies.

Schuller and Watson (2009, p. 172) suggest that during each of three different stages of life (young people, adults, older people), the skills people need are differently focused. They cite overcoming the risk of social isolation, staying healthy and remaining independent as core. However, as in many neat schemas, it classifies other important life matters as belonging to the other two stages as though young people's interests such as 'develop social networks' and 'gain new knowledge and networks' or those of adults such as 'look after their families' or 'save time, money, inconvenience' are no longer relevant to later life.

3.4 How Do Older Adults Want to Learn?

In the Brotherhood of St Laurence Australian capabilities survey it is interesting to note that while respondents rated 'being well-informed' and 'making my own decisions' at the top of their rankings, fewer than 50 % nominated 'learning new things' as among what they most valued in life (Kimberley et al. 2012, p. 26). This disjunction between the need for knowledge and skills and the notion of 'learning' suggests negative associations. Whether or not that is so, it is evident that the vast majority of older Australians spurn existing structured educational programmes, not because they don't need to learn, but because what is on offer is of insufficient interest or its modes of delivery are not congenial to them.

Nevertheless, it is formal learning that in most developed nations like Australia is given privilege and status. Formal learning is conventionally regarded as organised learning that involves curriculum, assessment and accreditation. By comparison, non-formal learning is organised, but with less emphasis on curriculum, little or no assessment and no accreditation, while informal learning is usually understood as all other types of learning (ABS 2009). But a closer analysis of informal learning indicates complexity and value beyond conventional attribution. For example, Schugurensky's (2000) three types of informal learning aptly describe older adults' learning preferences.

> Self-directed learning refers to 'learning projects' undertaken by individuals (alone or as part of a group) without the assistance of an 'educator'. It is both intentional and conscious. (p. 3).
>
> Incidental learning refers to learning experiences that occur when the learner did not have any previous intention of learning something out of that experience, but after the experience she or he becomes aware that some learning has taken place. Thus, it is unintentional but conscious. (pp. 3–4)
>
> Socialization (also referred to as tacit learning) refers to the internalization of values, attitudes, behaviours, skills, etc. that occur during everyday life. Not only we have no a priori intention of acquiring them, but we are not aware that we learned something. (p. 4).

The fundamental and arguably radical differences between structured and informal learning can be seen to revolve around the greatly reduced role of the teacher/

trainer and learning organisation, the relative invisibility of the learning processes and curriculum, and the greatly enhanced roles for the learner and the wider community. The paradox here is, to take Kral and Schwab's (2012, p. 101) learning:

> … is more likely to grow if [learning] itself is not over emphasised and adults' life projects are the focus of the activity. … [This] call to emphasise learning over formal teaching and teaching raises some serious questions for policy makers. The successful learning we observed was often inconspicuous or invisible. … This suggests the need to acknowledge 'soft outcomes' such as gains in self-esteem, personal development, confidence, motivation, collaboration and problem solving (Kral and Schwab 2012, p. 101).

3.5 Older Adults' Learning and Wellbeing

The potential gains associated with learning by older adults in Australia extend well beyond the individual to include family and community We live in a world where understanding ourselves as always being in relationship is important, and where *instrumental learning* (learning facts and figures without full understandings of their meaningfulness) is becoming less important than *communicative learning* (Habermas 1984). Learning (and teaching) at its best is a relational act where the environment invites us to want to be there, where we may possibly experience, learn and give back more than we expected (Southern 2007, p. 332), including to the community.

However, social isolation is widespread in Australia. Except in major cities and inner suburbs, the vast majority of the population lives in suburbs and non-urban locations that are far from age-friendly, poorly served as they are by transport and amenities. The preference of most older Australians to live out their lives in their own homes and the policies that support ageing in place, including the provision of home care services, detach them from family, friends and community and undermine the sorts of socialisation imperative to informal learning and wellbeing.

As a consequence of recent and major learning and wellbeing studies (Cooper et al. 2010; Schuller and Watson 2009), 'we now know much more about the impact of adult learning on health (including mental health), social participation, earnings and sense of agency' (Field 2009, p. 10). These understandings about wellbeing are supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2003) social determinants of health.

Lindstrom argues for the importance of 'sense of coherence',

> …, finding everyday life meaningful, having well-functioning social networks, being in touch with one's inner life (psychological wellbeing), having clear coordinates in life (such as having an existential position) are all conducive to a strong SOC [sense of coherence] and subsequently good health, wellbeing and quality of life. (Lindstrom 2010, p. 9)

He points to the stronger correlates between SOC and mental health and perceived wellbeing than to the objective physical status of health and that 'rather surprisingly', psycho-emotional and mental strengths seem to overrule socio-economic

and physical conditions in life. He argues that '… it should be possible to systematically organize structures in society in ways that are conducive to health in a life-course perspective' (Lindstrom 2010, p. 9).

Such thinking supports our notion that the value of learning goes well beyond the individual. Learning also builds networks, trust, reciprocity (give and take) and social connections, that, as Field (2005, p. 1) notes, help adults to advance their interests by cooperating with others.

3.6 Third Places and Their Particular Importance for Older Australian Adults

'Salutogenesis', a term coined by Aaron Antonovsky (Lindstrom 2010, p. 1) in the field of medical sociology, focuses on factors that support human health and wellbeing, rather than on factors that cause disease. Salutogenesis is particularly applicable to informal community settings in Australia where community inclusion and connection are much more important to the quality of later life than vocational skills for paid work. Identification of the mechanisms that are important in and between key health promoting settings (such as family, learning institutions, workplaces, health care institutions, leisure time arenas) is important for the overall healthy process.

Langworthy and Howard (n.d., p. 27) consider that an adult's first place is normally the home, the second is usually the workplace, with the 'third place' defining 'a social space where it is possible to have an informal meeting, chat to a friend or just hang out'. Older adults tend to congregate in these third places (Oldenberg 1999), usually public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal and happily anticipated gatherings beyond the realms of home and work.

Golding et al. (2014) make a case for more consideration of older men learning through life, in third places which are social, local and situated. Men's sheds in community settings are an excellent 'third place' example, with significant learning, health and wellbeing benefits now demonstrated in Australia (Golding et al. 2007, 2014; Flood and Blair 2013) and in international meta-analyses (Milligan et al. 2013). However, there are several risks in arguing the case for third places for older adults and in using such a model as the basis for enhancing their learning and wellbeing by supporting community agency and capability. There is the risk that increased privatization and marketization in a restructured welfare state increasingly transfer responsibility and risk from the society to the individual (Biggs and Kimberley 2013). Levitas (2000) gets to the core of the problem when she argues that there is a risk that the community might be become responsible for mopping up:

> … the ill effects of the market and to provide the conditions for its continued operation, while the costs of this are borne by individuals rather than the state (Levitas 2000, p. 194).

3.7 Learning Through Community Contexts

McGivney's (1999) research in *Informal Learning in the Community* provides a strong and complementary framework for analysing, learning and wellbeing in community settings. McGivney (1999, pp. v–vi) draws four main conclusions:

- first, that 'informal learning takes place in a huge variety of settings';
- second, that 'the location of learning is extremely important, often more so than its actual focus';
- third, that 'community-based learning plays a critical role in widening participation among adults who are educationally, economically and socially disadvantaged';
- fourth, the conclusion relates to difficulties of measurement of informal learning in community settings, leading to related difficulties with estimating its impact.

It is the second conclusion which most rings true in relation to findings about older adults' learning in adult and community education settings.

Recent Australian research has shown a direct link between participation in community organisations, learning and wellbeing (NSA 2013). The rapid growth and spread of the men's shed movement in Australia and internationally is the most recent example of other communitarian social movements that aimed to meet the needs of the 'common person' in ways that top down, institutional educational initiatives could not. Most of these movements have had particular benefits for disadvantaged groups, including families, children, women and men. In Australia, forerunners to the community men's sheds movement are the neighbourhood houses and learning centres (which appeal more to women) and before them mechanics institutes, whose foci were less about formal education and more about popular education and 'enlightenment' of those previously not connected through learning.

3.8 Conclusion

Our chapter is premised on positive findings of research that show that the subjective wellbeing of adults depends not so much on their health as on a range of contextual and social factors, among which social engagement plays an important role in Australia. Our fundamental conclusion is that learning and social engagement can be mutually reinforcing at any age, and that health and wellbeing are positive outcomes of both.

Older Australians with limited access to learning that suits their needs, preferences, pedagogies, locations and socio-cultural contexts are more often those who have been subject to adversities earlier in life. Their wellbeing (mental and physical) is more likely to already be diminished by risks accumulated earlier in life with obvious adverse effects on partners, families and children. Despite remarkable resilience, many are also less prone to recover because of their more limited access to

the resources, networks and capital (social, mental, physical, educational, family, community, skills and qualifications).

In 2009, the Australian Prime Minister released a visionary statement on *Transforming Learning and the Transmission of Knowledge* (PMSEIC 2009) recognising that 'Many of the assumptions regarding adult learning are consistent with the natural demands of informal learning' (p. 29), and that:

> … much adult learning occurs at transitional stages in the lifespan, when new challenges such as entering the workforce, starting a family or retirement, require a new set of skills and, in many cases, some rethinking of a person's self-concept.

The peak adult education body, Adult Learning Australia, is dedicated to lifelong and lifewide learning. Increasing numbers of formal international and national policy statements as well as research findings are now recognising the value of informal learning. What is missing in Australia is a national policy commitment of its value to older Australians.

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