

Overview

Later Life Learning (LLL): Its Role in Furthering E-Learning and Promoting Intergenerational Online Learning Partnerships

Sandra P. Hirst PhD and Carole-Lynne LeNavenec PhD
Associate Professor Emeriti - Nursing
University of Calgary, AB, Canada



SETTING THE CONTEXT: LIFELONG LEARNING

The concept of lifelong learning has gained popularity within many spheres of society, for example academic, scholars, and employers. No educational principle is voiced with such resolve as the belief that an individual should keep learning from one's early years to one's old age. Knowledge acquired in school is inadequate for a lifetime as knowledge changes over time. History provides examples of this fact, e.g. many believed Columbus would sail off the edge of a flat Earth when he sailed West across the Atlantic Ocean. Psychiatric illness was once 'cured' by a lobotomy. These "truths" at their time later proved to be false because of continuous learning. The argument for lifelong learning emerges.

Merriam and Kee (2014) discussed the benefits of lifelong learning from a social capital perspective. They wrote that formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities of older adults promote an active and engaged lifestyle that helps create and preserve community. Asongu and Nwachukwu (2016) described the contribution of lifelong learning to political stability. They identified that continuing education is a useful weapon in the fight against political instability. Similar benefits to lifelong learning have been described by other authors and researchers (Findsen, 2016; Hafford-Letchfield & Formosa, 2016).

As the population of older adults increases, the field of later life adult education needs to respond accordingly. Older adults are a distinct population that will influence adult education in the future due to their growth in numbers, societal status, economic resources, and desire to continue to learn and to teach. However, historically, older adults have been under-represented in formal adult education activities. We know that older adults actively learn for a diverse variety of reasons.



CURAC

A project promoting later life learning among older adults initiated by The College and University Retiree Associations of Canada /Associations de retraités des universités et collèges du Canada (CURAC/ARUCC). CURAC is a not-for-profit federation of retiree organizations at colleges and universities across Canada. Its

objectives include the sharing of information about activities of member organizations. Most of its members are over the age of 65 years.

An outgrowth of CURAC's commitment to its members, is the recent formation of its Later Life Learning Initiative. This is an on-line learning site that identifies learning activities for CURAC members across Canada. The Committee's objectives include:

1. exchanging information regarding upcoming educational sessions (online) that are available from member organizations and approved national and international associations that involve retired staff from colleges and universities;
 - e.g. program offered by an association on our east coast, available nationally
2. offering information about free access online communications options, as well as providing referrals to groups that provide free online training sessions to keep our digital skills up to date;
3. disseminating information regarding publications and related scholarly work by members of CURAC/ARUCC member associations; and
4. developing innovative strategies for Later life Learning.

ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS

- CURAC Board Support
- LLL Committee – national representatives
- Calendar support
- Networks – contribution to Lifelong Learning

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Increase number of national committee members
- Building connections via Networks and Networking