Intergenerational Learning: A Valuable Learning Experience for Higher Education Students

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Abstract

Problem Statement: This paper reports on the evaluation of a project rooted in the principles and practice of Intergenerational Learning. Intergenerational Learning is increasingly seen as a key strategy in providing learning opportunities for older people in societies where the profile of the population is ageing rapidly. No significant work has, however, been done on the outcomes for the younger participants in intergenerational learning and this research focuses on that issue. Almost five hundred students have, to-date, taken part in the intergenerational learning project in Dublin City University and provided an ideal opportunity to research this problem.

Purpose: This article aims to: Provide an explanation of Intergenerational Learning at both a conceptual and practical level. Explore stakeholder reactions– concentrating in particular on the cross generational experiences of the student participants point to some potential future directions for Intergenerational Learning initiatives.

Methods: A 'mixed method' design was used in which a participant survey was completed followed by in –depth interviews (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, 90). In phase one of the research a large sample of the participants were surveyed to identify trends and generate a detailed profile of those taking part. There followed semi-structured interviews with a sample of both younger and older participants. The results of the survey are reported in Corrigan (2011) and this paper is limited to an

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analysis of the interviews conducted with the student volunteers who participated in the project. Thematic analysis was used to identity, analyse and report patterns within the data.

Results and Findings: The paper explores the benefits of engaging higher education students in intergenerational learning initiatives. Firstly the students found that they gained knowledge, competences and skills which contributed to both their personal and professional development. Secondly the process proved to be an excellent means to foster intercultural and intergenerational solidarity.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Intergenerational learning is an excellent methodology for enabling transformative education. The research confirms that people learn from one another through such processes as observational learning, imitation, and modelling. It argues that the development of intergenerational programmes creates significant learning opportunities and a transformation in attitudes between generations. Intergenerational and intercultural solidarity is also fostered. This paper advocates the development of similar initiatives in other higher education institutes as a means to promote engagement between older people and higher education students.

Key Words: Intergenerational learning, transformational learning, higher education, student learning, social capital.

Introduction

The Dublin City University (DCU) Intergenerational Learning Project (DCU ILP) which began in 2008 was designed to explore the benefits of knowledge transfer and understanding between generations in a third level context. The original objective of this project was to create a teaching, learning and research opportunity where older adults had the opportunity to meet with and learn from University students. At first the concern of the project was primarily to benefit older people by giving them access to a range of short courses and modules designed specifically for them. Most of the funding came from bodies with a remit to improve services for older people. The focus was entirely on the older people and the intergenerational element simply arose from the fact that current University students were asked to volunteer to act as tutors and mentors to these older people. The research element of the project was concerned with the responses of the older people to the experience. Gradually, however, it became clear that the younger students involved were remarkably committed to and influenced by the experience and it was decided to extend the research to include them. The vision of the project changed to include an appreciation of the value of a two way transfer of knowledge, expertise and insight between senior citizens and University students.

This paper briefly describes the DCU ILP, says a little about intergenerational learning theory and the research in the area to date. It then goes on to focus on a

largely un-researched area, namely, the impact of the experience of intergenerational learning on younger adults. In essence, it is argued that the DCUILP demonstrates many of the benefits and one useful methodology of both transformative learning as described by Mezirow (1991) and of social learning as theorised by Bandura (1977). It confirms that people learn from one another through such processes as observation, imitation, and modelling. In particular it confirms that the development of dialogical spaces where older and younger adults can meet together creates significant learning opportunities and a transformation in attitudes and understanding between generations.

The Concept of Intergenerational Learning

Up to fairly recently, intergenerational learning was conceptualised as an informal process taking place in families, tribes or other such groupings. Subsequently the perceived breakdown in these relationships and processes as described by theorists of cultural capital such as Putnam (1993, 1995) has generated interest in formalising a theory of intergenerational learning. This argument is made by Hatton Yeo and Newman who have conducted much influential work in this field. They suggest that traditional familial intergenerational learning is informal and takes place through natural multi-generational interaction. However, in more complex modern societies, the family alone no longer transmits this knowledge, and increasingly it is either lost or the process must happen outside of the family (2008, p. 31).

There is a limited conceptual understanding of the notion of formal intergenerational learning. In North America, the term intergenerational programs is used to refer to those activities or programmes which' increase cooperation, interaction and exchange between people of different generations enabling them to share their talents and resources and support each other in relationships that benefit both the individual and their community' (Generations United, 2006, p. 1). Granville (2002, p. 26) explicitly links social capital theory and intergenerational learning and argues that there can be a wide diversity in what practitioners mean by it. He concludes that an intergenerational approach is best described as a 'style of working that can lead to many different activities and outcomes. Hatton Yeo and Ohsako (2000, p. 1) suggest that intergenerational learning 'is being developed in a diverse and wide range of practical ways but with a limited theoretical or conceptual basis'. Nonetheless they suggest a definition of intergenerational learning programmes as 'vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations' (2000, p. 3).

Some work on the practice but rather less on the theory of intergenerational learning has been undertaken in recent years. Perhaps the most influential of this was published as Promoting Intergenerational Learning Policies, Research and Networking (UNESCO, 2000) which was essentially an evaluation of previous research undertaken by Ohsako and Hatton-Yeo published in 1999.The aim of the original research is described as twofold namely 'to highlight the importance of intergenerational programmes' and 'to summarise key issues to underpin future

research and policy development in the area' (UNESCO, 2000: Foreword). The research consisted of a comparative study of intergenerational learning theory and practice as it has developed in ten countries across the world including Germany, Japan, China, America, England and Sweden. The report concludes by affirming the benefits of intergenerational learning arguing that 'irrespective of where we are in the world, the quality of the contact and connectivity of the young and old says much about the quality of all our lives'(UNESCO, 2000, p. 21) .

Other researchers, for example, Cambridge and Simandiraki (2006) are primarily interested in intergenerational learning as a tool for healing and reconciliation. They refer to an intergenerational programme titled 'German pupils and Jewish seniors: intergenerational dialogue as a framework for healing history' which is cited in the work of Ohsako (2002, p. 209-219). This involves engagement between German youths and former Jewish refugees. They draw on this example to demonstrate how intergenerational learning can impact on reconciliation in a post-conflict educational context. To further illuminate this argument, Cambridge and Simandiraki (2006) also describe an environmental educational initiative in which groups of seniors were involved with younger students in a Canadian project aimed at the improvement of people's relationship with their environment and there conciliation of very differing generational views on environmental issues.

Kaplan (1998) sees the benefits of intergenerational learning as being primarily related to the enhancement of social capital through lifelong learning. According to Kaplan, older people can generate community-based learning experiences not only for themselves but also for the young. He based his research on a study of the Japanese experience and explains how intergenerational initiatives in Japan are

> a ….powerful stabilizing force within Japanese society as they help people of all ages to pursue their educational objectives, arts and recreation interests, desired state of health and welfare, environmental preservation and community development goals and attain a sense of well-being.(1998, p. 2).

A common theme in the intergenerational learning literature is education as a transformative process. Influential in this regard is the work of Mezirow who argues that the purpose of education is

> to help learners to become more imaginative, intuitive, and critically reflective of assumptions; to become more rational through effective participation in critical discourse; and to acquire meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, integrative, discriminating, and open to alternative points of view. By doing this we may help others, and perhaps ourselves, move toward a fuller and more dependable understanding of the meaning of our mutual experience. (1991, p. 224)

This notion of shared experiences became the key concept in the design and development of the DCU ILP.

The work of Bandura (1977) was also influential in the project design. He has argued that social interaction in the form of observational learning and learning through dialog are central to moral growth and personal development. In his view there are four key processes of observational learning:

> Attention, to learn through observation, you must pay attention to another person's behaviour and its consequences;

> Retention, which involves storing a mental representation of what you have experienced in your memory;

> Reproduction, which requires that the learner enacts a modelled response by converting the stored mental images into external behaviour

> Motivation, which affirms that the learner is unlikely to reproduce an observed response unless he is motivated to do so.

Influenced by these four stages the project methodology stressed one-to-one interaction in the form of practice-based individual tutorials, encouraged cross generational discussion about personal experiences through shared coffee/meals and through blog postings and stressed to the younger people the need to reassure and motivate the older learners with feedback and praise.

The Irish University Intergenerational Learning Project

As noted above, the project was at first only concerned with providing learning opportunities for older people. A particular emphasis was placed on the 'digital divide', the way in which older people can be cut off from much of what is happening in society by being left behind by rapid developments in technology. To address this problem, formal lectures on new technology were provided by experienced academics. These were supported by one-to-one tutoring on the use of computer applications provided by current students. Overtime the information and communications technology (ICT) area, while remaining a key part of the project, has been supplemented by modules in many areas including the media, creative writing, genealogy, health and well-being and science.

The students who acted as mentors to the older learners have so far been drawn from all faculties of the university and from undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This has provided a wealth of learning from a multi-disciplinary perspective from across the campus. At the beginning of each semester, an email is sent to the student body presenting the project and asking for volunteers. One unexpected aspect of the DCU ILP, has been the popularity of the project amongst international students, who continue to make up a large percentage of the volunteers. There are students active in the project from India, China, Japan, Africa, North America, Egypt, Eastern and Western Europe. The cultural diversity of the students involved has contributed hugely to the richness of the project. To date, nearly five hundred student volunteers and over four hundred older adults have participated. Involvement means making

oneself available for up to twelve two hour tutorials. This represents a remarkable willingness on the part of the students to give of their time without recompense.

Training for all student volunteers is mandatory and is designed to facilitate their becoming familiar with the ethos and philosophy underpinning intergenerational learning. The volunteers participate in a training programme which takes place on the first day of the project. This is usually in the format of an informal question and answer session where the teaching and learning strategies are outlined. It is emphasized to the students that it is not necessary for them to be ICT experts, but instead they are informed that what is most important is that they transfer their skills with patience and an ease that enables the older students to feel comfortable.

As the project has grown, many of the older learners have returned to take more advanced modules in various areas. In the case of ICT applications this has resulted in the design and development of a website and blog spot dedicated to the reflections and sharing of experience between the university students and the senior people who have participated in this study.

The project was concerned with the introduction of an Intergenerational Learning Programme on a third level campus. The aim of the study was to evaluate the extent to which this programme had the ability to transform the quality of teaching and learning of both the older people and the higher education students who participated. The specific research questions were the following: (1) The first research question was to assess the extent of the professional and personal development which emerged for the younger people while meeting and learning with older people. (2)The second research question was to analyse the potential benefits in terms of intercultural and intergenerational understanding for the university students and for the wider community of engaging older and younger people in an intergenerational learning programme.

Methodology

Research Design

The objective of the research was to collect and analyse the perceptions of the participants concerning their involvement in the project. A mixed methods design provided the best opportunity to provide a fuller and more complete picture of the views of both the older and younger participants. An 'embedded' design was used in which a quantitative strand was completed at the beginning of the study followed by a qualitative strand which was the major phase of the research (Creswell &Plano Clark, 2011,p. 90). The quantitative strand –a survey-was conducted first and was designed, both to provide key information and to inform the later qualitative aspect of the study. The first phase of the research involved a survey of a large sample of the participants to identify trends and generate a detailed profile of those taking part. The qualitative strand involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with a sample of both younger and older participants. The interviews were designed to develop a detailed and in-depth understanding of how involvement in the project

has, in their perception, impacted on their personal and professional development and their views of ageing. Unlike other mixed methods designs, the intent of the embedded design is not to merge two different datasets and therefore the results of each strand are reported separately(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).This paper is limited to an analysis of the interviews conducted with the student volunteers who participated in the project.

Sample

The sample of participants selected for interviews were drawn from the 492 student participants in the project. A random stratified sampling strategy was used to select a fairly specific group of individuals for the study together detailed information about the research problem and purposefully inform the research problem (Creswell, 2007, 2008). Students were chosen in order to represent the various faculties of the University, from undergraduate and postgraduate courses and from Irish and overseas students who had taken part. The research sample was composed of fourteen students. Nine of these students were undergraduates and five were post graduate students. All students were studying in a diversity of disciplines across the campus, for example students from Humanities and Social Sciences, Engineering, Business Studies, Computer Applications, Nursing and Health Science came together to participate in this study. Six of the fourteen students were international students from China, India, North America, Germany, Egypt and Nigeria.

Data Gathering Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data for the study as they provided, 'a constantly evolving, dynamic and co-created relational process to which both participant and researchers contribute' (Finlay, 2011,p. 24). Fourteen students agreed to participate in the interviews. One-to-one interviews were planned and an interview schedule was drawn up. The interview schedule was not strictly adhered to, but was used 'to respond flexibly to the interviewees whilst still keeping track of what has been covered and what remains to be considered' (Ribbins 2002, 210). With the participants' permission, all interviewed were recorded and transcribed in full.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identity, analyse and report patterns within the data as this method is not linked to any pre-existing framework, and 'therefore it can be used within different theoretical frameworks (although not all), and can be used to do different things with in them' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). In the study, thematic analysis was used as an essentialist method which revealed 'experiences, meanings and the reality of participants', and as a constructionist method which examined 'the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). The researchers completed thematic analysis of the data following a guide provided by Braun and Clark (2006, p. 87):

These were 1. Familiarizing yourself with your data. 2. Generating initial codes. 3. Searching for themes.   4. Reviewing themes 5. Defining and naming themes; 6. Producing the report. (2006, p 87)

The themes defined and named in the process above were as follows: (1) Professional Development This theme refers to indications in the data of student perception of increased and extended   professional skills development such as effective communication skills. (2) Personal Development which refers to such areas as increased confidence and commitment to continuous learning. (3) Intercultural understanding between generations, for example, greater understanding of Irish culture and traditions among international students. (4) Intergenerational Solidarity which included sub themes such as empathy and respect for the knowledge and experience of older people. The analysis revealed a high degree of recurrence and inter-coder agreement across the themes.

Results

The research questions defined above were concerned with evaluating the personal and professional development of the younger people in the project and the extent to which intercultural and intergenerational solidarity was enhanced by the process. The findings suggest that the participation of the younger higher education students did transform the quality of teaching and learning for them in terms of both personal and professional development. It also suggests that the social interaction of both the older and younger people contributed to both intercultural understanding and intergenerational solidarity. Each of the themes explored in the research questions were identified in the data and displayed below in tables and quotations to help provide a deeper understanding.

Professional Development Skills

Table 1

Classification of the Perceptions of Participant about Professional Development

Area Of Questioning (*Semi-structured questions*)	Core Relevant Narrative Formed From Quotation (*Key content summarized through relevant quotations and linked by formulated meaning statements*)	Emergent Themes (*Initial themes arising within quotation*)	*f*
	Emphasis on development of effective communication skills for DCU students. (DS4, DS6 , DS 7, DS 8, DS13, DS14))	1.Development of effective communication skills	12
	Contribution to development of competence and innovative thinking. (DS3, DS5, DS8, DS11, DS13))	2.Students understanding of Competence and Innovative thinking	10
	Awareness and development of leadership skills. (DS1, DS3, DS8, DS11, DS14)	3. Reflection and awareness of Leadership Skills	11
	Opportunities to reflect on career opportunities and choices for the future. (DS5, DS6, DS7, DS9)	4. Students reflections on career choices and opportunities for the future.	9

DCU Student, DS

DS8 a multi-media post graduate student, reiterates the notion of the programme as a way to develop his confidence:

The   project has helped me grow in confidence and greatly enhanced my knowledge of what it means to both learn and teach. I have stood in front of a class for the first time and taught a subject I am passionate about.

DS7 reflects on the rich narrative of the older students and its impact on him. He says:

The (older) students in my opinion are expert communicators. The descriptive nature and style of language used in both the stories and some emails allowed me to create clear images in my head of the situations they were describing. By writing in this fashion, the messages carried much more meaning and I was amazed about how engrossed I became in them and how much attention they commanded. The expressive style of language is in stark contrast to the much more concise style I have become accustomed to in online communication. I feel that the emphasis on description and meaning which I have learned from the (older) students is something I will definitely bear in mind for my future online communications.

DS3 reflects that:

I am a master's student myself and have to take complex computer classes such as JAVA. I find such classes challenging and initially daunting. I can therefore empathise with the learners on how complicated learning new computer skills can seem at first. I find myself that persistence, practice and determination are the key to acquiring new computer competencies. Watching the learners growing in confidence and in skill level was rewarding to watch and be a part of. Computer competencies are invaluable and can open up a whole new world for this group.

A management student, DS5, saw the project as enhancing his ability to be innovative in his career in the future:

The most innovative manager will be the one who harnesses that which older generations can offer so that sustainable business growth can be achieved. This POD (Personal Opportunities Development) was reflected on with future strategic thinking in mind. One of the impacts that has been brought home to me because of my involvement in this programme is the impact that the ageing populations will have on labour markets in the future. Without this programme, I may have ignored a demographic which is becoming more work and hopefully creation-focused once more. In order to be successful in a future top management career, an understanding of the world from a wider economic viewpoint will be important. Therefore, understanding the challenges faced by ageing populations, and the fact that people are living longer, could have a significant impact in future business strategies.

DS4, a business post- graduate student, discusses how her participation in the programme has contributed towards 'innovative thinking'. She says:

I view the Intergenerational Programme from two distinct perspectives. First, it was a fantastic opportunity to gain networking experience with a generation so far removed from my own, and it was ultimately mutually beneficial. In addition, this programme facilitated my development of competence in innovative thinking.

Another Business student, DS11 reflected that:

I think the intergenerational learning programme gave me the opportunity to strengthen my leadership skills. When the students (the older people) wanted to learn how to attach pictures to emails for example, I taught them the necessary steps. By doing this I was helping them to express their desires and interests in the digital world. It helped me to look at the digital world from their point of view.

Other professional development examples in the blogs included quite a number of students who were impressed with their own capacity to teach and began to consider teaching as a possible career.

DS6 an undergraduate Business and Finance student comments on how the project has helped her with her career choice:

Personally, the project has helped my chances of gaining employment and has influenced my career choice as I am now considering a career in teaching and IT.

DS7 stated:

It has made me much more aware of usability and accessibility issues, which are very important for my studies. I am also amazed at my ability to explain difficult ideas-perhaps teaching is for me.

Personal Development Skills.

Table 2

Classification of the Perceptions of Participant about Personal Development

Area Of Questioning (*Semi-structured questions*)	Core Relevant Narrative Formed From Quotation (*Key content summarized through relevant quotations and linked by formulated meaning statements*)	Emergent Themes (*Initial themes arising within quotation*)	*f*
	Growth in self –confidence. (DS1, DS3, DS8 , DS9,DS11, DS 14)	1. Personal experience of self confidence	10
	Giving back to society while taking time out from studies. (DS1, DS5, DS6, DS7, DS9, DS12,DS13))	2. Students experience of volunteering as part of the DCUILP.	9
	Improvement of social skills because of involvement in the DCUILP (. (DS1, DS2, DS7, DS11, DS14)	3. Contribution to Social Skills	12
	General self-development influenced by engagement in the project. (DS7, DS8, DS4, DS11, DS14)	4. General personal development skills.	9

DCU Student, DS

A second common theme in the student narrative can be loosely described as personal development. This was usually expressed in terms of growing self –confidence and feelings of empowerment.

DS9 said:

It (the DCUILP) has improved my communication and social skills, promoted my self-esteem and increased my confidence.

D1 reflects that:

Yes, my confidence has improved a lot. I have realised that I have information, which is beneficial to others and helpful. I also feel better and more at ease with people my own age and feel better about answering questions

DS8 reflects:

I have spoken at a conference in front of a scarily large audience. I have grown to become comfortable with situations, which I would have gone to the ends of the earth to avoid before I joined the Project just over a year ago.

DS1 commented:

I decided to take part in this programme as a means of giving back to society while taking some time out from my studies. In one of the classes I helped a student to set up an account on

Youtube and perform activities like searching for music videos, reading comments and posting comments on the site. It was very uplifting for me to see how happy this lady was… Here I can see a link between the DCU ILP programme and the things that I came across in my consumer behaviour module during the year in my postgraduate study in marketing…..If marketers can access this segment (ie older people) effectively then they will be able to gain a foothold.

DS7 reflections:

I have found myself re-learning all these new technologies along with the older learners. I have had to stop and evaluate everything I know and ask myself how I know it and how did I react the first time I was presented with this technology. This has been empowering for me and for the older learners in terms of assisting them to feel at ease with their use of the technology.

DS14 reflects on this theme:

I think the sharing of knowledge aspect of the course is hugely important. ….. Often I find that the exchange of knowledge is not tangible but instead comes in the form of self-development for myself personally. I have found this very valuable both in my personal life and in my academic and workplace environments.

1.Intercultural understanding between generations.

Table 3

Classification of the Perceptions of Participant about Intercultural Understanding

Area Of Questioning (*Semi-structured questions*)	Core Relevant Narrative Formed From Quotation (*Key content summarized through relevant quotations and linked by formulated meaning statements*)	Emergent Themes (*Initial themes arising within quotation*)	*f*
	Understanding of Irish culture and lifestyle. (DS4, DS6 , DS9, DS 10, DS11)	1. Familiarity with Irish Lifestyle and culture.	8
	Breaking down language barriers and culture differences between learners (DS3, DS8, DS9, DS10, DS12, DS13))	2. Students experiences of breaking down language barriers and cultural differences.	7
	Friendship shared between older and younger people of different cultures. (DS1, DS2, DS6, DS9, DS10, DS11, DS12, DS14)	3. Friendship shared between people of different cultures.	9
	Awareness of ICT to bridge the gap between geographical and cultural divides. (DS1,DS5,DS8, DS11, DS12, DS13)	4. Experience of ICT Knowledge transfer as a means to break down cultural and geographic divides.	7

DCU Student, DS

Many of the international students who participated in the study suggested that intergenerational learning emphasised similarities and understandings that traversed culture and age. One example is DS4's reflection. She highlights the intercultural benefits for here as an international student because of her involvement:

DS4 said:

It provides a platform for me to get familiar with Irish culture and lifestyle. At the beginning, I was worried that the language barriers and culture differences between the learners and I might be a big problem, but it turned out that my fears were all for naught. They were like my grandparents, how can I feel nervous while facing them? Their sincerity and kindness closed our distances, their serious desire of lifelong learning deeply impressed me, and their sense of humour often delighted me.

DS10, an international student said:

By communicating with older learners, I have learnt the way they live, their family, the old and new ways of living. What I have learnt is not only the knowledge but also the Irish culture. It is significant for a foreigner to get adapted to a new environment. This project… is about establishing a learning community. In this environment, learning and knowledge is valued and appreciated, and each one of us involved is both a transmitter and receiver of this knowledge'.

DS2 is also an international student. This is her reflection:

I remember the first day when I arrived here, all kinds of feelings came into my heart, excited, curious and panic, etc…However, most were expectations about the life in the future. As time flies, I found that the language barrier was not a problem at all since the friendship could be understood in many different ways. And learning from friends is easier as there was no pressure at all. On the other hand, I did learn more than I could have learnt from my lectures, from people in the Project, and I will treasure them as my best present I've got from Ireland!

DS11, a postgraduate student, also reflects on the intercultural benefits and embraces the new understanding of information technologies as a form of communication that bridges gaps between culture and generations. He said:

The project (ILP) put in context the true power of the internet as a means of communication, in that it bridges the gap that stretch between family, continents, language, age and culture….While I appreciate that this project was not built with my learning in mind, I have to confess that I learnt quite a bit during the few weeks. I discovered benefits that being part of a team can have on the performance and experience of everyone present. The knowledge base is significantly larger than any one person might hope to have, ensuring every issue that a learner may have can be addressed successfully.

DS12 reflects on the importance of this programme as a dialogical process which fosters and supports familial ties and relationships across cultures:

I think this is an excellent platform where two generations can come together -to know, to share and to help each other. I hope to encourage such ideas in India also, as the social and family structure is changing there and there is a need for similar thinking. The traditional joint family is not so practical any more. I believe, here, the best attitude is: I will volunteer for anyone's father or grandma and I hope that someone will volunteer for mine. Because in the end we all need each other and we all can benefit from the experience.

4. Intergenerational solidarity between generations.

Table 4

Classification of the Perceptions of Participant about Intergenerational Solidarity

Area Of Questioning (*Semi-structured questions*)	Core Relevant Narrative Formed From Quotation (*Key content summarized through relevant quotations and linked by formulated meaning statements*)	Emergent Themes (*Initial themes arising within quotation*)	*f*
	Facilitating respect and empathy between older and younger people. (DS1, DS3 , DS7, DS12,DS13)	1. Experience of understanding between generations during tea/coffee break.	12
	Reciprocal transfer of knowledge between generations. (DS2, DS8, DS9, DS13, DS14)	2. Experience of the benefits of the shared transfer of knowledge and life experiences between generations.	9
	Continuous 'learning for the love of learning' throughout the lifespan. (DS1, DS2, DS7, DS4, DS9, DS12, DS14)	3. Awareness of younger students to the learning needs of older people.	12

DCU Student, DS

DS3 an undergraduate student talks about the transfer of knowledge between generations through the DCUU ILP as a means of developing intergenerational solidarity. This was, achieved in particular through the informal learning structures established. She states that:

If you were to perhaps to sum up the basic principle upon which this program was founded, a quotation from Gilbert K. Chesterton, an English writer, would not be a million miles away from the truth, 'Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another. 'I don't think it is too far-fetched to equate the experiences of the students and the older learners to this quotation. In fact, although IT is a big part of the course, it is the cup of tea and the banter of the lunch break or between typing that makes the program what it is.

DS13 says:

To say that all the knowledge is passed from student to learner is not true at all, in fact, since taking part in the programme I've added to my social-networking repertoire. I can now count twitter, blogging and iGoogle as the new 'skills' I've taken on. And I hope the skills acquired by the older learners are the same with additional confidence boost and a general I-am-going-to-try-it-and-see-what-happens, a recipe for success in most situations.

In a way, my self-esteem has been helped in that every Saturday morning; I am reminded that I have worthwhile knowledge to pass on. It has been a great experience for me. It also put

college worries into perspective. I felt a real sense of achievement and pride when seeing the progress my student made throughout the week.

DS9, a postgraduate student, echoes this theme and highlights how her engagement with the older students and how it has helped here with her own stress levels:

In a way, my self-esteem has been helped in that every Saturday morning I am reminded that I have worthwhile knowledge to pass on. It has been a great experience for me. It also put college worries into perspective. I felt a real sense of achievement and pride when seeing the progress my student made throughout the week.

DS12 said:

Ben Sweetland once said "We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own"… For me these sessions were not only limited to pure teaching but were more of a learning experience. My classmates have a lot more experience to share with us and what I was offering was so small in comparison.

DS4, an undergraduate student, reflects that:

Volunteering has given me the opportunity to facilitate the older learners and teach them some IT skills. This has greatly improved my confidence and self -esteem. The older learners are my teachers too. They tell me stories of their life experiences, they give good advice, and they teach what we cannot learn from books - life skills. One of the most important things that I have learnt from my older friends on the Project is to 'learn for the love of learning'.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Intergenerational Learning Project has grown steadily since 2008. This is partly because of the enthusiasm of the older learners for new learning opportunities but also, somewhat unexpectedly, because of the willingness of the students to give so generously of their time, energy and knowledge. This aspect of intergenerational learning, the role of the young givers in the process, has not received much research attention and it was decided to focus on it for this paper. Around five hundred young people have contributed to the project over the four years and the positivity of their reflections seem to suggest that all institutions of higher education should consider intergenerational programme not only as a service to older people but as a valuable learning experience for students.

This paper identifies and summarises the self-identified benefits for the university students and to an extent the wider society in the U ILP. The data was collected through interviews which contained participant reflections which on analysis can be grouped into four main categories of outcome. These are the role the project played in developing professional and personal competences and skills, and the ways in which it has facilitated intercultural and intergenerational solidarity. The former are essentially positives accruing to the individuals involved but the latter have wider social capital ramifications for public life and policy. In a rapidly

diversifying and ageing society intergenerational learning offers learning and social interaction for older adults. It also represents a way of breaking down barriers through the transformation of the attitudes of younger participants.

An important part of transformational learning is generally recognised to be that individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and consciously implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. At the core of transformational learning theory, is the process of 'perspective transformation' which has three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioural (changes in lifestyle). Mezirow's (1991) understanding of transformational learning was largely influenced by Habermas's (1981) theory of communicative action. Habermas argues that the key to emancipation is to be found in communication, that is, in free moral discourses between individuals http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Theory_of_Communicative_Action - cite_note-1 and deliberative discourses amongst equal citizens. As the data presented above shows, the Dublin City University Intergenerational Learning Project (DCUILP) facilitates and supports this type of discourse by enabling social learning processes as described by Bandura (1977)   to take place. The project is a striking exemplar of Mezirow's theory of transformational learning in action.

It is appropriate to leave the final comment to one of the student volunteers. DS11 reflects on how he has felt:

privileged to have been a part of something this special. To conclude, I suppose I would like to impart some wise words to provide some assurance for the (older) learners in participating in this project: Never be afraid of doing something new. Remember that an amateur built the Ark and a group of professionals built the Titanic.

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Kuşaklararası Öğrenme: Yükseköğretim Öğrencileri Için Değerli Bir Öğrenme Deneyimi

Atıf:

Özet:

Bu makale, son 5 yılda bir İrlanda Üniversitesindeki Kuşaklararası Öğrenim prensiplerinin ve uygulamalarının kökünde yatan bir programın gelişimi hakkında rapor niteliği taşımaktadır. Yükseköğretim düzeyinde kuşaklararası öğrenimi destekleyen ve teşvik eden fırsatların sağlanması, araştırmaya katılan üçüncü düzey öğrencilerin mesleki ve kişisel gelişimine katkıda bulunmuştur. Kuşaklararası Öğrenim Projesi (ILP), 2008 yılında üçüncü düzey bir ortamda nesiller arasında bilgi aktarımının ve öğreniminin faydalarını keşfetmek için tasarlanmış bir araştırma çalışması olarak başlamıştır. Bu, o günden bugüne Üniversitenin hayatının bir parçası oldu ve ILP, yani Kuşaklararası Öğrenim Programı adını aldı. Geçici bir projenin, uzun vadeli bir şeye dönüşmesi, bu konseptin elverişliliğini ve sürdürülebilirliğini gösteriyor. Üçüncü düzey bir ortamdaki kuşaklararası girişimler, hem genç hem de daha yaşlı insanlar için mütekabiliyet yaratan, faydalı bir deneyim sağlıyor.

Bu projenin ilk hedefi, yetişkinlerin, Üniversite öğrencileriyle tanışarak onlardan bir şeyler öğrenebilme imkânının bulunduğu bir öğretim, öğrenim ve araştırma fırsatı sunmaktı. Projenin ana ilgi noktası, en başta yetişkin insanlar için tasarlanmış kısa dersler ve modüller vererek onlara fayda sağlamaktı. Finansmanın büyük bir kısmı, yaşlı insanlar için verilen hizmetleri geliştirmeyi hedefleyen kuruluşlardan geldi. Odaklanılan nokta, tamamıyla yaşlı insanlar, ve Üniversite öğrencilerinin bu yaşlı insanlara öğretmenlik ve eğitmenlik yapmak için gönüllü olmasından doğan kuşaklararası durum oldu.

Bu makale, ILP programının geliştirildiği ortamı anlatmayı, hem kavramsal hem de pratik düzeyde Kuşaklararası Öğrenimin kapsamlı bir genel bakışını ve açıklamasını sunmayı, özellikle öğrencilerin ve yaşlı katılımcıların nesiller arası deneyimine odaklanarak ilgililerin geliştikçe programa karşı tepkilerini keşfetmeyi, Yüksek

Öğrenim Kuruluşlarında Kuşaklararası Öğrenim için gelecekteki potansiyel yönelmelerin deneme amaçlı bir değerlendirmesini yapmayı hedeflemektedir.

Projenin araştırma unsuru, yaşlı insanların bu deneyime verdiği yanıtla ilgileniyordu. Ancak yavaş yavaş genç öğrencilerin projeden etkilendiği ve projeye önemli derecede bağlı olduğu belirginleşti ve araştırmaya onların da dahil edilmesine karar verildi. Projenin vizyonu, bilginin, uzmanlığın ve anlayışın yaşlı vatandaşlar ve Üniversite öğrencileri arasında iki yönlü aktarımının değerini anlamaya yöneldi. Bu yazı, kuşaklararası öğrenimi alışılagelmiş gerontoloji alanından alıp yüksek öğretimdeki diğer çeşitli öğretim ve öğrenim fırsatlarına daha geniş bir şekilde entegre etmeyi hedefleyen yeni bir zihniyet sağlamak için yüksek öğretimin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu, kuşaklararası öğrenimin sadece yaşlılar için değil, aynı zamanda genç yetişkinler için de birçok faydası olduğunu kabul eden, önemli bir zihniyet değişimidir. Bu, kuşaklararası öğrenim kavramının, mevcut programlara dahil edilmesiyle ve yaşlı ve genç insanların, İnternet üzerinden ve üçüncü seviye bir kampüste şahsen tanışıp birlikte eğitim alabilmesi için kasıtlı olarak imkanları destekleyen yerlerin sağlanmasıyla mümkün olabilir.

Bu yazının merkezi teması, kuşaklararası öğrenim girişimlerinde yüksek öğretim öğrencileriyle kurulan etkileşimin faydalarıyla alakalıdır. Konu, Kuşaklararası Öğrenim Programının bakış açısından sunulmuştur. Bu, ilk olarak yaşlı insanların yeni teknolojilere alışmasına yardım etme amaçlı bir tür hayırseverlik çabası olarak görülmüştür. Ancak gönüllü olan öğrenciler ve potansiyel olarak toplumun daha geniş bir kesimi için de faydaları olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğrenciler, önce şahsi ve mesleki gelişimlerine katkıda bulunan bilgiler, beceriler ve kabiliyetler kazandıklarını fark etmiştir. İkinci olarak bu sürecin, yaşlı ve genç nesiller arasındaki kültürler arası ve kuşaklararası dayanışmayı teşvik etmenin mükemmel bir yolu olduğu görülmüştür. Bu yazı, daha geniş toplumdaki yaşlı insanlar ile üçüncü düzey öğrenciler arasındaki etkileşimi desteklemenin bir yolu olarak benzer alanların geliştirilmesini savunmaktadır. Bu yazı, ILP'yi kısaca tanımlamakta, günümüze kadar kuşaklararası öğrenime ve bu alandaki araştırmaya değinmekte ve bunun ardından da büyük ölçüde araştırılmamış olan bir alana, yani genç yetişkinlerin kuşaklararası öğrenim deneyiminin etkisine odaklanmaktadır.

Esas itibarıyla DCU ILP'nin, Mezirov (1991) tarafından tanımlandığı haliyle dönüştürücü öğrenimi mümkün kılmanın kullanışlı bir yöntemini ve birçok faydasını gösterdiği savunulmaktadır. Proje tasarımı, Bandura (1977) tarafından tanımlandığı şekilde sosyal öğrenim teorisi ve bu teorinin uygulanabilmesi için gerekli adımlardan etkilenmiştir. Burada rapor edilen araştırma, Bandura'nın öne sürdüğü gibi insanların gözlemsel öğrenim, taklit etme ve modelleme gibi işlemler yoluyla birbirlerinden bir şeyler öğrendiğini doğruluyor. Özellikle yaşlı ve genç yetişkinlerin buluşabileceği diyalog alanlarının gelişiminin, nesiller arası tutum ve anlayışta değişim ile önemli öğrenim imkânları yarattığını doğruluyor. Yaşlılar ve gençler arasındaki kuşaklararası öğrenimin çift yönlü fayda potansiyelinin, ulusal ve uluslararası düzeyde de daha geniş toplum için faydaları mevcuttur. Kuşaklararası ve kültürler arası dayanışma, kuşaklararası öğrenim yoluyla güçlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuşaklararası öğrenim, dönüşümsel öğrenim, yükseköğretim, öğrenci eğitimi, sosyal sermaye.