Chapter 16

Open Educational Resources: Lifelong Learning for Engaged Ageing

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ABSTRACT

All over the world, governments, societies, and researchers are looking for ways to keep the ageing population active and engaged. The need of the hour is in looking for the tools that can help in making ageing engaging. OER supported lifelong learning with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competence can be a viable option for improving the wellness of ageing population. Following this approach, the present chapter discusses: global initiatives to keep ageing population active and engaged; using lifelong learning to make ageing population active, productive, and healthy; possibilities to use OER for offering lifelong learning; making ageing population competent to share their knowledge with society by using OER; key possibilities and challenges in offering OER supported lifelong learning; and potential strategies to make ageing engaging through OER supported lifelong learning.

INTRODUCTION

The emerging demographic change towards an ageing population is introducing drastic changes in our society. A Report of Population Division (2002) suggests that population ageing is a global phenomenon affecting every man, woman and child—but different countries are at very different stages of the process, and the pace of change can differ greatly from one country to another. The Report further states that population ageing has profound implications for many facets of human life. Reflecting on this trend, Population Council (2009) advocates that securing the health and psychological and economic well-being of this growing segment of the developing-world population is challenging for a number of reasons. Because health tends to decline with age and older adults
often stop working, the elderly require a unique combination of material and physical supports. Therefore, societies need to find ways to motivate and assist older people to stay active for longer in the labour market, to prevent social isolation and promote societal inclusion and finally to help people stay independent for as long as possible (European Commission, 2007).

A publication from AGE (2007, p.4) states, “In order to flourish, older people need the essential skills which underpin society such as language, literacy and numeracy. Familiarity in the use of information and communications technology is also of increasing importance. It is essential to ensure that older people’s skills are appropriate to staying active and meeting the functional demands of life in our society.” These discussions reveal about two issues: first, population ageing is a global challenge and societies need new and innovative initiatives to make ageing population engaged and healthy; second, learning throughout life and use of information communication technology (ICT) are going to play key role to make ageing population more active, healthy and productive. Before discussing further on these issues, it will be useful to learn and discuss about important national/global initiatives related to ageing population.

KEEPING AGEING POPULATION ACTIVE, PRODUCTIVE AND ENGAGED: GLOBAL INITIATIVES

As global population of persons aged 60 and over is rising dramatically (WHO, 2008) governments, societies, and researchers are working on various initiatives to keep ageing population active and engaged. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies highlighted discriminatory policies and practices against older persons in the World Disaster Report 2007 and the World Health Organization (WHO) recently conducted a review of scientific research, field reports and expert opinion to inform health action in crises. In 2008-2009, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in humanitarian action under UN auspices started to formulate guidelines for more age-responsive policies and practices. Beside these efforts, a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations are also offering their services to make ageing more engaging.

WHO is providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends (http://www.who.int/en/). While, UN Programme on Ageing (http://www.un.org/ageing/) a part of the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) is formulating age-responsive policies and practices. In Europe, the European Commission has launched an Action Plan for Ageing Well in the Information Society which includes measures to: raise awareness and share good practices; build consensus via stakeholder cooperation; promote policies to stimulate innovation in the public sector and to overcome technical and regulatory barriers to market development; accelerate take-up and innovation; boost research and innovation (European Commission, 2007).

For several years, HelpAge International (http://www.helpage.org) has been working to improve the lives of disadvantaged older people through a global network that today spans more than 70 affiliate organizations in 50 countries. American Federation for Ageing Research (http://www.afar.org) has supported the science of healthier ageing and playing an important role in providing and advancing knowledge of ageing and mechanisms of age-related disease. Global Action on Ageing (http://www.globalaging.org) a non-profit organization with special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council based in New York at the United
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