Community-based Lifelong Learning in Singapore

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What is Lifelong Learning (LLL)

- voluntary pursuit of knowledge for productive employment and/or self enrichment
- Occurs throughout the life course
- Formal, informal & non-formal learning
- not limited by age, structure, place or subject matter
- Important building block of active ageing
Why Lifelong Learning

• Improves employability
• Lowers risk of dementia
  – Play board games: 74% lower risk
  – Play an instrument: 69% lower risk
  – Do crossword puzzles: 38% lower risk
  – Dance: 76% lower risk
  – Learn a new language
  – Gardening

• Boosts self-confidence and esteem
  → enhances active independence
• Promotes social engagement & continued participation in society
  → prevents social isolation and lowers risk of depression

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports
Profile of Seniors

Current Seniors (aged 65 and above)

• lower educational qualifications & SES
  → less inclined towards LLL

• main concerns: “lack of confidence to attend such classes”, “too old to learn something new”, “not interested or motivated”

• Major impediment: lack info on LLL programmes

Future Seniors (middle age & baby boomers)

• Better educated & social-economic statuses
  → more sophisticated learning needs

• More IT savvy and self-directed in LLL

• Prefer group learning (75.2%) and gathering info to teach themselves vs current seniors (57.6% vs 40.3%)

• Major impediment: lack of time

Source: MCYS National Survey on Learning Needs of Middle Age and Seniors 2008
C3A Understanding Baby Boomers 2009
Types of Learning

Organised and structured learning

Non-work related

- Courses offered by community organisations, e.g. tennis, languages, yoga, cooking, musical instrument, ballroom dancing

- Learning from family members, friends & interest groups or through print & other media, and the internet, e.g. IT skills, magic, opera, drama classes, line dancing, art & craft, gardening

Work-related

- Work-related courses organised & funded by government agencies

- Vocational training at the workplace, e.g. OJT

- Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, e.g. learning from colleagues; reading manuals, reference books, etc; and the internet

Legend:

- Formal learning
- Non-formal learning
- Informal learning

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports
Assessment of Existing LLL Players

- **Institutes of Higher Learning**
  - *budding* development in formal accredited courses for seniors
  - full fees

- **Government Agencies**
  - *growing* in research and offering of community-based LLL for seniors
  - nominal fees

- **Non-Profit Organisations**
  - *most vibrant* sector offering a variety of non-accredited LLL for seniors, mainly lifestyle oriented
  - nominal fees or free

- **Commercial Parties**
  - *Moderate offering* of accredited & non-accredited courses for vocational and non-vocational purposes
  - Full fees, few subsidies for seniors
Environmental Scan: Gaps

- Raise awareness of LLL benefits and existing offerings
- More research on motivations for learning, reduction in seniors’ LLL inhibitions *(Demand)*
- Catalyse agency-driven community-based LLL for current seniors
- Build capacity of LLL service providers *(Supply)*
- Inject intergenerational elements

*Future: self-driven community-based LLL*
Community-based

• Less structured, informal learning where seniors enrol out of self-motivation to stay mentally and socially active

• Broad goals:
  – promote social participation of seniors & foster social cohesion
  – encourage active independence
  – enhance the mental and social wellbeing of seniors
  – empower seniors to contribute to society through continual impartation of knowledge & skills
Intergenerational Learning Programme (ILP)

Objectives:

• enhance mental and social wellbeing of seniors
• foster a flourishing community-based LLL landscape to offer seniors choices
• facilitate experiential learning for youths
• improve public perception & attitudes towards ageing & seniors
• build community support & intergenerational solidarity
Partners for ILP Pilot

Content Providers
- iDA SINGAPORE
- Health Promotion Board

Strategic Partners
- MCYS Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports
- Lingnan University
- Ministry of Education, Singapore

Schools
- Raffles Institution

NPOs
- Fei Yue Community Services

http://www.elderacademy.org.hk
Curricula for ILP Pilot

• IT

• Health Management

*Important to involve seniors in designing the curriculum, what & how do they want to learn?*
Up, up & Away...!

- Expand ILP: primary to tertiary, childcare centres?
- Establish a cross-sector network of LLL partners
- Outreach to seniors through a variety of channels, e.g. word of mouth, radio, 50plus Portal, print, TV