Later-Life Learning (LLL) – Different Considerations for the Emerging Chinese Baby Boomers in Singapore

MA Kheng Min
Monash University
Presentation Outline

. Existing LLL Landscape in Singapore
. Factors influencing LLL preferences
. Future LLL landscape in Singapore
Context of Discussion

Singapore – 5 million residents (76% Chinese), the only ‘natural’ resource. High per capita GDP, high literacy rate.

Economy – 99% service industry

Challenges of an ageing population
- Average life span 82 years old.
- By 2030, one in five will be 65 years or older.
- Emerging cohort has different profile and different intellectual demands.
Study Setting

Currently, many later life learning opportunities but almost all in

- Skills, employability training programmes
- Health, hobby, sports, cultural and computer literacy courses

Appeal to emerging cohort of older adults who are ‘healthier, better educated and richer?’
• **Understanding Gap**
  – personality, cultural and social factors influencing motivation to engage in later life learning of Singaporean Chinese

- types of learning experiences that older Singaporeans pursue for personal interest.

• **Inform policy and program development of traditional and non-traditional learning.**

• **Promote active later life learning culture in Singapore.**
  Lower ageing-related health costs; Growth in silver industry.
Older Adults and Learning

. Caucasian later life learners
  - cognitive interest (intellectual curiosity)
  - innate desire to learn
  - absence of external incentives
  - personal growth and satisfaction
  - social contact/relationship
  - socio-economic factors such as gender, marital status, economic status, past learning experience
Older Adults and Learning

Caucasian later life learners perceive learning as:

- social experience
- coping strategy
- way to have fun
- keep updated with the world
- more self-reliant
- stay healthy, protect against cognitive decline
- establish sense of identity and meaning in life
Caucasian later life learning experiences:

- formal, informal, non-formal learning
- leisure learning
- incidental learning
- heritage and art (museums)
- public libraries
- everyday life
- religious/psychological process
Motivation of Chinese later life learners

- culture of lifelong learning (rooted in Confucian teachings)
- past learning experience
- social support
- living arrangements
- availability and accessibility
- self-efficacy
- personality – openness to experience
- boost self-image and self-confidence
Older Adults and Learning

. Chinese & Later Life Learning

. Social reasons (vs individualistic)
. Stress ‘effort’ as opposed to ‘ability’
. feel ‘shame-guilt’ or loss of face for lack of desire to learn or poor learning performance
. later life learning is a very respectable activity
Meaning of Learning (rooted in Confucian teachings)

- Learning is the noblest of all human pursuits.
- Learning is a never-ending pursuit.
- Learning without flagging.
- Keep learning as long as you live.
Older Adults and Learning

. Singaporean later life learners

. 52% interested in learning, only 20% take up rate – mostly in skills-related courses.
. Strongest motivation – keep my mind active;
. No. 2 motivation – keep up with world
. Weakest motivation – so I can contribute
. Transport or accessibility not an issue
. Sense of belonging
. Desire to learn and try new things
. Desire to expand network of friends
Older Adults and Learning

Likely LLL landscape for emerging Baby Boomers in Singapore?