

The Ageing Population: An Impetus for Reform of the Community Engaged University

Walter Archer, University of Alberta, Canada
William Kops, University of Manitoba, Canada
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Overview of presentation

- Demographic change around the world
- How higher education has been adapting recently
- Education of older adults in Canada
- The “community engagement” trend in HE
- Possible synergy between community engagement and the education of older adults

Ageing of population in a number of countries

- Mostly developed countries are affected (“demographic deficit”)
 - Many less developed countries still undergoing rapid expansion of population (“demographic dividend”)
- Japan and parts of Europe – ageing population, **low** immigration
- Canada, Australia, and the USA – ageing population, **high** immigration
- The special case of China

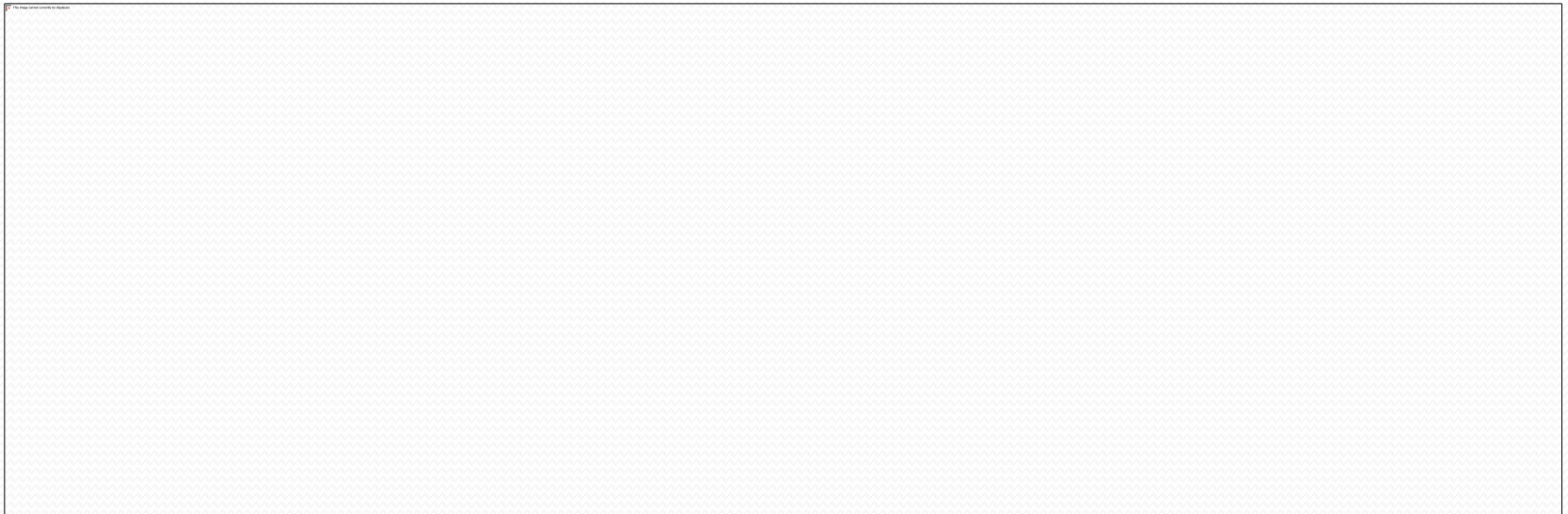
Education programs for older adults

- Variety of terms used
 - Adult education (generally excludes higher education)
 - Lifelong learning (this term used in N. America)
 - Logically should include everything between prenatal and postmortem education, but generally means informal and non-formal education that continues on from where the person exits the formal education system
 - University of the Third Age (U3A)
 - Original French model (connected to a university) 1972
 - Original British model (not connected to a university) 1981
 - Other models developed elsewhere

About demographics

“Demographics explains two-thirds of everything.”

David Foot (Canadian economist and demographer)



Foot, D.K., & Stoffman, D. (1996). *Boom, Bust and Echo - How to Profit From the Coming Demographic Shift*. Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter and Ross.

<https://populationpyramid.net/>

Origins of the University of the Third Age (UTA, of U3A)

“In 1973 a highly rated gerontology course, run by Toulouse University of Social Sciences exclusively for local retired people, led to the formation of the first UTA.

...

Different UTA approaches began to develop by the late 1970s, even within France, including several which were a direct creation of local government and not connected with a university. The original focus on older people by universities also began to broaden to include other educationally disadvantaged groups.”

(Swindell, 2009, p. 6)

British Model of the U3A

UTA underwent a substantial change when it reached Cambridge in 1981 and the abbreviation for University of the Third Age became U3A to reflect a different approach. Rather than relying on university good will the founders of the British model adopted an approach in which there was to be no distinction between the teachers and the taught (Laslett, 1989). Members would be the teachers as well as the learners and, where possible, members should engage in research activities. The "self-help" ideal was based on the knowledge that experts of every kind retire, thus, there should be no need for older learners to have to rely on paid or unpaid Second Age teachers. Laslett provided a substantial rationale for this approach. (Swindell, 2009, p. 6)

USA Model - OLLI

- Approximately 120, university-based Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (OLLI) across USA
- Funded by Bernard Osher Foundation – on application initially with start-up grant then endowment
- Requirements set out by Osher Foundation and national office to provide resources and support, including an annual conference; published a journal from 2006-2011
- Characteristics: University-based, designated university facilities and administrative staff, part of university budget process, membership driven in terms of participation in courses and program planning, expected fund raising activities, combined pedagogy

Older Adult Education (OAE) in Canadian Universities

- Multi-stage data collection
 - Online web search (seniors, older adult, elders)
 - Short survey to sample of 48
 - Long survey to 13/16 – 3 TBA
 - Interviews with select of 16 - continuing
- Portal through continuing education units to 48 Canadian universities
- To date 32 responses – 67%
- To date 16 responding universities indicated programs targeted at older adults – plus 4 others evident from websites

Canadian Model

- Less formalized nationally with some provincial networks of U3A (e.g. Ontario) and up until recently a national organization CATALYST and/or TAN
- Characterized by features of the French, British and USA models; a continuum - University-based programs, U3A organizations affiliated with universities, fully independent U3A organizations; most a mix of expert, typically university faculty, and peer-based instruction
- Continuum - Non-affiliated (Creative Retirement Manitoba) - British (McGill) – French (Ryerson, UAlberta) – USA (URegina)

What do these programs accomplish?

Currently “successful ageing,” consisting of:

- low risk of disease and disease-related disability;
- maintaining high mental function;
- maintaining high physical function;
- maintaining strong social networks; and
- doing interesting things.

(Swindell, 2009, p. 6)

Canadian University Commitment OAE

- 100% respondents agreed the development of OAE programs is encouraged by their university
- 90% respondents ranked mandate of CE 1st or 2nd as reason why university offers OAE
- 55% respondents ranked commitment of university 2nd or 1st as reason why university offers OAE
- 55% respondents ranked serve growing demographic 1st or 2nd as reason why university offers OAE

OAE – Participation Characteristics

- Who attends
 - Average age range 59-77; median/mode average age 70
 - Majority female 60-75⁰%; male 25-40⁰%
 - Vast majority retired average mediana/mode 80%; few employed 5-10⁰%
- How many attend
 - Small to large programs – with range 120-2,500

OAE – Participation Characteristics

- Revenue generated
 - Range \$0 (free) to \$650,000 – most typical (median) \$130,000
- Why attends
 - 1) 91% learning sake
 - 2) 75% socialize
 - 3) 57% seek specific goal
- Barriers to participation
 - 1) 38% insufficient time
 - 2) 56% limited money; 44% transportation
 - 3) 38% physical disability; 38% insufficient time

OAE – Participation Characteristics

- Types of programs
 - 100% indicated non-degree - personal interest
 - Variety of variation indicated by 25%
 - Short courses combined with semester length – 50% less than one day; 33% one day; 48% full term/semester
 - Lecture popular 100%
 - Group discussion 50%
 - Online courses single mention – one course
- Who teaches
 - University faculty 100%
 - Community-based experts 50%
 - Volunteers – peer lead 33%
 - Other – grad students 33%

Future OAE @ Canadian Universities

- Opinions from survey
 - 100% positive future for OAE at university – mainly attribute to growing demographic and resulting demand plus variable other specific factors
- UM age-friendly campus
 - To encourage the participation of older adults in all the core activities of the university, including educational and research program
 - To promote personal and career development in the second half of life and to support those who wish to pursue “second careers”
 - To recognize the range of educational needs of older adults
 - To promote intergenerational learning to facilitate the reciprocal sharing of expertise between learners of all ages
 - To widen access to online educational opportunities for older adults to ensure a diversity of routes to participation
 - Plus 5 other principles

Future OAE @ Canadian Universities

- Ratsoy proposal
 - Independence of older adult education organizations will continue
 - Encourages Canadian universities to reach out and form partnerships with non-profit, high impact, third-age learning organizations – provide administrative and facilities support
 - Partnerships can enhance quality of life of both campuses and communities
 - Civic duty of universities to maximize the benefits of education for seniors for mutual benefit and greater public good

Issues around OAE

- Individual well-being versus community benefit
- Diversity – narrow (WASP) versus diverse participation
- Class-based – haves (informed and affluent) versus have nots (traditionally non-participants in education)
- Ability-based – healthy (mobile/access) versus restricted (physically/mentally challenged)
- Changing demographic - more heterogeneous OA population than in past – presenting different wants and interests

What is the potential of OAE?

- Can transform some of the learning fostered by U3As from a personal good to a social good
- For HEIs with attached U3As, working with their U3A could be one way of fostering community engaged learning, and helping to improve their communities
- New life into the humanities/liberal arts?

Community-university engagement

“ ... a new scheme involving centres for community-university engagement [in India] has the potential to transform both communities and universities if deployed strategically.”

Tandon & Singh (2015)

INDIA

Transforming higher education through community engagement

Rajesh Tandon and Wafa Singh

20 February 2015 University World News Global Edition Issue 355

Community-engaged HEIs: Rhetoric and reality

“People pay **lip service** to [public engagement]. They’re happy for you to do it, but make sure you **do it on your own time**. It does depend on who your manager is. Most heads of department will likely say ‘no’ unless you get money for it.”

A young academic interviewed in the study conducted by Watermeyer and Lewis (2015)

Community-engaged HEIs: Who will do the work?

- Counts for little or nothing in world or national rankings of HEIs
- Professors are focused on research because that's what they are rewarded for
- An increasing proportion of teaching is done by ill-paid contingent teachers
- Community engagement is seldom rewarded in decisions about tenure and promotion
 - Therefore, it can be damaging to a career, particularly for those without tenure

Community-engaged HEIs: A possible solution

- Since the main problem is a shortage of time for academics to become involved in community issues, ally with U3As and other similar associations
 - Members of U3As are scattered throughout the community, knowledgeable about community issues
 - Generally well educated
 - Often willing to take initiatives to improve their communities
 - Often retired, so don't have to be paid

Engagement and OAE

- Canadian examples of engagement-type initiatives within OAE programs
 - University of Regina
 - Volunteer and community programs
 - Aboriginal Grandmothers Caring for Grandchildren – support network (monthly meeting)
 - Intercultural Grandmothers Uniting
 - Speakers bureau provides speakers on a range of topics such as reducing social isolation, elder abuse, age-friendly communities
 - Ryerson University
 - Caring Clowns – a program is for older adults who want to make a difference by bringing joy, laughter, and fun into the lives of long-term care residents
 - Community Engagement
 - Elder Abuse Awareness Project - a multi-phase initiative benefitting seniors and their families.
 - Conversational Connections - gives multilingual Ryerson University students an opportunity to practice conversational English in informal settings

VOLUNTEER & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

ABORIGINAL GRANDMOTHERS CARING FOR GRANDCHILDREN SUPPORT NETWORK

Grandmothers caring for grandchildren are invited to monthly support network meetings with interesting speakers from community agencies. Tea and bannock are always served. Childcare and rides will be provided for those who call in advance. For more information or to register, call 306-585-5766.

Day/Time: Fri, Jan 15, Feb 12, Mar 11, Apr 8, May 13, Jun 10, 9:30-11:30am

Location: GA 106, 2155 College Ave.

INTERCULTURAL GRANDMOTHERS UNITING (IGU)

All older women who are interested in building bridges of understanding, respect, trust and friendship among First Nations, Métis and other women are welcome to attend these monthly meetings. For more information call 306 585-5705 or 306-585-5766.

Day/Time: Fri, Jan 15, Feb 19, Mar 18, Apr 15, May 20, Jun 17, 10:30am-12:30pm

Location: Indian Métis Christian Fellowship, 3131 Dewdney Ave.



REACHING EVERY DIRECTION TO REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION

This program will bring together university students and older adults interested in working together to address issues of social isolation amongst older adults in Regina. For more information call 306-585-5766 or 306-585-5806.

SPEAKERS BUREAU

The Lifelong Learning Centre has speakers available to talk to groups and professionals about the joys of lifelong learning and volunteering, Regina Age-Friendly Community Initiative, retirement planning and much more. If you want to request a speaker for your group or are interested in becoming one, call 306-585-5766 or 306-585-5806.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We are looking for volunteers to assist with reception duties, promotional activities, newsletter production and more. Call 306-585-5766 if you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities at the Lifelong Learning Centre.