

Towards Good Active Ageing for All In a context of deep demographic change and dislocation

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Governments in a growing number of countries are confronted by the challenge of deep demographic and technological change with ageing populations and the looming impact of the fourth industrial revolution with artificial intelligence and bio-technologies that are changing the world we have known. The societal transformations driven by these changes will inevitably impact on the capacity of many people to age well.

A strategic approach to this challenge is essential. The views set out in this paper are based on discussions at a PASCAL International Conference in Suwon, Republic of Korea in September 2018 and a subsequent report of the PASCAL/PIMA Special Interest Group (SIG) on Learning in Later Life that I was co-editor of.

In approaching the question of ageing well, the SIG went back to the concept of active ageing developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in a report in 2002. The WHO developed this objective through a model of three policy pillars: Health, Participation, and Security.

While these objectives are all relevant to active ageing, they ignore the key role of lifelong learning and related objectives such as happiness that are important in ageing well. The SIG decided that a broader conceptual and policy framework was needed and added a further five policy objectives. These were happiness, citizenship, inclusion, fulfilment and employability.

Happiness has been seen as an attribute of good societies and lives from the ancient Greeks onwards. The emergence of the UN Sustainable Development Goals has focused attention on happiness as a goal and measure of social progress with annual world surveys of happiness now undertaken. This goal is particularly relevant to the senior years, in which there is often much to make for depression, isolation, loneliness and unhappiness. Disciplines such as positive psychology can contribute much to enhance good practice in this area.

Citizenship is fundamental to building a good sustainable world. This requires active citizenship with both local and global perspectives. Participation in local community projects can serve to build civic perspectives and global understanding and a necessary sense of empathy towards others. Seniors can contribute much from a lifetime of experience and can serve as community leaders in this necessary development. Civic participation makes an important contribution to ageing well and adds to purpose and meaning in later life

Inclusion has long been an objective of lifelong learning policies. While progressing this objective is related to participation and citizenship; there are other issues, including discrimination and gender inequality that may need to be addressed.

Fulfillment, or learning to be, has been an objective of lifelong learning policy back to the UNESCO Faure (1972) and Delors (1996) reports. It should continue to be a prime objective of

learning in later life so that learning continues to contribute to personal growth and wellbeing in an era of ageing populations and dislocation.

Employability is a necessary objective for the reasons mentioned above with people now working later in life. The OECD recently gave the average retirement age for men as 72 with women a little lower. Fostering employability in the emerging era has implications for all sectors of education and training and policies for lifelong learning. Learning to learn should be seen as an essential competence to be pursued throughout life in changing conditions, including the growing porous boundary between paid and unpaid work.

Several of the objectives proposed as pillars of good active ageing were supported by PASCAL Policy Review Papers written by the author of this paper. These Papers were on happiness, learning to be, developing holistic and integrated learning cities; health and EcCoWell, and entrepreneurship. They are available on the PASCAL website in Mandarin, as well as English. An appendix to this paper gives further information on PASCAL Policy Review papers, including access. I have taken the position that the concept of learning to be as personal fulfilment, developed by the 1972 UNESCO Commission report, remains central to ageing with wellbeing in a period of radical change and dislocation.

A key aspect of these pillars of active ageing is that they support both individual and community wellbeing. We have taken the position that individuals are more likely to age well when they live their lives in sustainable communities bonded by the humanistic values that has underpinned our approach to good active ageing.

The individual and community learning together

Connecting the learning by individuals in community contexts has a history of over 100 years. The concept of community learning centres can be traced back to Danish and Swedish folk high schools in the nineteenth century which were designed to provide further education opportunities for people, particularly those in rural areas.

These ideas were carried forward in the twentieth century by *Volkhochschulen* in Germany established in 1919, *Kominkan* in Japan established in 1946, and subsequently *Neighbourhood Houses* in Australia in the 1970s. A recent review by Duke and Hinzen of *Community Learning Centres* in six Asian countries showed how the community learning idea has also spread across Asia.

While these complimentary developments of community learning centres share much in common, there are particular nuances that reflect the context and culture of individual countries. For example, Japan has been the country most affected by the demographic revolution with a rapidly ageing population. This impact has gone along with a proactive approach by Japanese authorities in responding to the challenge of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in what has been termed Society 5.0. Society 5.0 has a deliberate people orientation with society leading, rather than technology. This orientation is described by Harayana (2018) in the following terms.

We humans remain central actors. Traditionally innovation driven by technology has been responsible for social development, but in the future we will revise our way of thinking,

focussing on society that makes us happy and provides a sense of worth. That is why we focus on the word society as the foundation for human life.

This orientation gives a particular importance to the network of *Kominkans* which have been described by Makino as “the basis of a decentralised revitalisation of Japanese society”.

While *community learning centres* were not specifically designed for seniors, they have a particular value for learning in later life, while also providing opportunities for inter-generational learning, and so serving to temper the isolation of many seniors with the loss of things that have previously brought meaning to lives.

Viewed historically, learning cities may be regarded as a later manifestation of strategies linking individuals and communities for learning and community building. Learning cities also have the distinctive feature that the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning developed a comprehensive international framework for learning cities with key features which gives a certain international consistency to learning city initiatives around the world.

While the *Beijing Declaration on Learning Cities and Key Features* adopted at the First International Conference on Learning Cities in 2013 gave an agreed international framework for international development, learning cities have continued to evolve in responding to the emerging challenges of their local and global context. For example, the Third International Conference on Learning Cities in 2017, added entrepreneurship and decent work to the objectives of learning cities, each of which can be relevant to enhancing the wellbeing and quality of life of seniors into the later years.

The PASCAL report on *Good Active Ageing* recognised the important role that cultural policies and institutions can have in contributing to seniors ageing well. Heritage learning has a particular value in recognising the contribution that older people have made to society. The growing popularity of family heritage research and oral histories testifies to this interest. Family heritage research can add to wellbeing through providing perspectives on lives and fresh understanding. There are innovations directed at the life stories of individuals, such as the American Story Corps, which illustrate how life stories and heritage can add to wellbeing.

Building on existing resources and ideas

I would like to add that China has considerable experience in University of the Third Age (U3A) type institutions and developing learning cities that can be extended further. Kuan, in the PIMA/SIG report, stated that there are some 60,000 U3A type institutions in China with more than 7.0 million members. I had the good fortune to visit Shijingshan Elderly University in Beijing last September and was particularly impressed by the opportunities provided to students to enhance wellbeing through experience in the traditional Chinese arts and crafts.

Beijing and Shanghai have been international leaders in learning city development, both participating in the PASCAL International Exchanges program (PIE) that I initiated in 2011 and led until 2015. The experience of China in learning city development could be extended to a range of smaller communities through government initiatives supported by universities such as Tsinghua.

Learning cities are cost effective by building on existing resources, extending partnerships and sharing ideas. There is a role for government policy at all levels in facilitating initiatives that

build on and extend the experience of China in both U3A-type institutions, community colleges and learning cities in ways that enhance the wellbeing of people in later life. Such initiatives should address the range of factors, both psychological and practical, that bear on wellbeing in later life. Much can be achieved through building on existing resources and sharing ideas.

Managing the transitions

A significant aspect of supporting seniors in ageing well relates to managing the transitions in the life course so that there is not an abrupt discontinuance of the things, including work and family, that have brought meaning and purpose to the lives of people.

This is likely to require re-thinking the changing shape of the life course, so that policy and practice can be brought into line with the realities of contemporary lives. This was the position taken by the report from the UK Inquiry into *Learning Through Life* (Schuller & Watson, 2007) which suggested that the adult stages of modern life courses would be better seen in terms of the following stages: 18-25, 26-50, 51-75, and 75+.

I appreciate that there are cultural and economic differences between countries in the way that life course progression may be changing. However, where there such changes, recognition of these changes would both enable individuals to plan for ageing well, while also facilitating government policy and services to support the major transitions in the lives of people. With many seniors opting for part-time work in some countries, for both financial and personal interest reasons, training and skilling services could be geared to supporting these transitions in the lives of people. Community Learning Centres, U3A-type institutions and learning cities could each contribute to improving transitions in the lives of people.

I would like to add that a particular issue exists in the care and wellbeing of older citizens, the group that Schuller & Watson saw as over age 75. In countries like Australia many of this group are in care often in institutions where a range of problems exist so that the Australia Government recently established a Royal Commission to inquire into the care of the elderly in such institutions. More thought needs to be given to learning in this stage of the life course. Technology can be used creatively in enhancing the quality of life in these years.

Responding to the challenge of technology

Older people are likely increasingly in the future to be affected by the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Not only may this impact on the employability of seniors, but also the radical changes in the shape and practices in society will impact on the psychological wellbeing of seniors through removing many of the things that brought meaning and purpose into their lives. This challenge is already seen for many people who lack computer literacy in a world where the digital revolution is being forced upon them by the way in which information and services are being provided. The pace of change in the technological revolution will undoubtedly increase this impact detrimentally to the wellbeing of many older people. It will add to the imperatives for learning in later life as a source of wellbeing and personal fulfilment.

This is a serious challenge that social and educational policies and strategies will need to address. I touched on this question in a recent article I termed *Being Human in Age of Artificial Intelligence*. In this, I saw the need to strengthen humanistic values that sustain individual lives and communities. The UNESCO 2015 report on *Rethinking Education* took a similar approach and argued for an integrated approach based on sound ethical and moral foundations.

A humanistic vision reaffirms a set of universal ethical principles that should be the foundation for an integrate approach to the purpose and organisation of education for all.

I will return to the question of integration which is relevant to ensuring that services provided for people in later life are effective in adding to wellbeing.

We need in the context discussed at this symposium to return to the things that bring resilience in both individual lives and to the sustainability of communities. I have suggested that bringing meaning and purpose into lives in a world of constant change is a fundamental prop for resilience. Research on resilience in communities in periods of disaster, such as earthquakes and floods, has shown the importance of social cohesion in lessening the impact of such disasters. Seniors can have an important role in building social cohesion in communities, drawing on their life experience.

A catalyst for change?

The big issue raised by this subject is whether the convergence of the demographic and technological revolutions will serve as a catalyst to bring about a renaissance in policy for lifelong learning and building good sustainable communities that provides the necessary support for people thriving in this demanding context of radical change. The director of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab (2016), puts this perspective in the following terms:

The fourth industrial revolution has the potential to robotize humanity, and thus compromise our traditional sources of meaning – work, community, family, identity. Or we can use the fourth industrial revolution to lift humanity into a new collective and moral consciousness based on a shared sense of destiny.

The convergence of the demographic and technological revolutions adds to the major global issues highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Each of these challenges will require “lifting humanity into a new collective and moral consciousness based on a shared sense of destiny”. The challenge of ageing well in later life should be seen in this broader global context so that the necessary conceptual and policy framework reflects this context. These imperatives add to the importance of learning in later life so that the life experience of seniors can be drawn on as a resource in addressing these global challenges, while also giving meaning and purpose to the lives of seniors. Adult education has an important role in devising strategies to advance these objectives. Innovations reported by city members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities give promise of further progress in developing a global collective and moral consciousness.

The global challenge articulated by Schwab brings the imperative to reconceptualise the entire concept of how longevity and society interact with each other. The approach taken by the PIMA SIG is a step along this path, but more research and sharing of ideas is needed. The convening of this conference has been a valuable contribution.

Integrating policy and practice

A further important issue to be addressed in public service delivery of programs to support people in ageing well, is that of integrating policy and practice so that the desired outcomes are achieved.

PASCAL has been examining the question in learning city development since 2011 through an initiative we call EcCoWell: integrating economic, community, wellbeing and learning aspects of development. I wrote the original EcCoWell paper in 2012 titled *Living and Learning in Sustainable Opportunity Communities*. The city of Cork in Ireland liked this concept and made EcCoWell a central feature of their learning city development. A particular strength of the Cork approach was the active contribution of the Healthy City Committee through arranging discussions on important issues such as mental health. Similarly, the Cork environment network became engaged and was a major contributor to EcCoWell development.

The Cork experience also pointed to the value of lifelong learning festivals in extending lifelong learning ideas throughout the community, and building partnerships to advance these ideas. The Cork Lifelong Learning Festival grew from a few events in its initial years to over 500 events by 2013 and built the coalitions to drive Cork as a successful learning city which was recognised when UNESCO invited Cork to host the Third International Conference on Learning Cities in 2017.

A further EcCoWell idea taken up by Cork, was the concept of learning neighbourhoods: the idea that integration of policy strands is best achieved at a local level in learning neighbourhoods. Cork initially established two suburban neighbourhood and these have now been extended to five. There is much value in developing a few exemplar neighbourhoods where objectives such as supporting people ageing well can be tested, then extending the lessons learned to other communities. Interaction between learning neighbourhoods can be very productive.

While governments need to set policy frameworks, the local community is the place to implement practices to support people ageing well that really matters. Interaction between learning neighbourhoods in a city can be creative in responding to needs and developing approaches to wellbeing in later life.

Building an age-friendly sustainable society

WHO followed up its work on active ageing by developing concepts of age-friendly cities and rural communities, and arrangements to produce such communities. The concept of age-friendly environments extends across physical and social environments, as well as municipal services that contribute to well-being. Unfortunately the WHO model did not include lifelong learning as the empowering influence that can drive and integrate the various dimensions of age-friendly communities, and this approach has been followed by cities and governments around the world. For example, four Australian state governments have adopted age-friendly programs without including lifelong learning.

The wellbeing of older people is best enhanced by a combination of measures that support good active ageing in the sense outlined in this paper, with a broad framework for building a sustainable age-friendly society that takes account of particular needs in all stages of the life course, including policies for supporting learning throughout life. Governments at all levels, civil society, and a range of organisations should be partners in giving effect to such a vision.

Governments should set the conceptual and policy framework, including a broad vision for a sustainable age-friendly society, while broad partnerships involving other stakeholders should develop practices that progress these goals. Much of this I have observed in the development of the Beijing and Shanghai Learning Cities, and last year in the practices of the Suwon Learning City in South Korea. Local learning neighbourhoods are particularly important in influencing community practices that support wellbeing. While the various policy pillars discussed in this paper are all important, there is particular importance in learning, health, and community relationships that can contribute much to wellbeing in ageing.

Frameworks that have developed over time, such as community learning centres and learning cities, can be taken further in building a sustainable age-friendly society. I have suggested in the PASCAL and PIMA report on *Good Active Ageing* that a new generation of learning cities may be needed. Arrangements are needed that foster and encourage creativity and innovation in the dual challenges discussed in this paper. Dialogue between innovative learning communities can contribute much.

The critical challenge of deep demographic and technological change should be seen as a catalyst to rethink the things that make for wellbeing and sustainability in all stages of the life journey, including good active ageing, so that steps are taken to build such a society. Learning to be remains a central aspiration for such a society, and for the things that make for wellbeing in ageing.

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APPENDIX — PASCAL POLICY REVIEW PAPERS

A number of PASCAL Policy Review papers (PR) were prepared to support the ideas in this report, particularly the conceptual ideas on good active ageing set out in Part I of the report. These PRP papers are listed below. PASCAL PRs are short papers directed at key policy ideas in selected fields. They usually have an orientation to recent development and report key recent sources.

The following suite of PR papers were prepared by Peter Kearns to support the conceptual ideas brought into the lead paper for the strand of learning in later life at the 2018 PASCAL Suwon international conference and Part I of this report.

- PR 10 *[Developing holistic and integrated learning cities: Health and EcCoWell](http://pobs.cc/1ipnj)*, <http://pobs.cc/1ipnj>
- PR 14 *[Integrating happiness in sustainable learning cities](http://pobs.cc/1jhd2)*, <http://pobs.cc/1jhd2>
- PR 15 *[Building entrepreneurship in sustainable learning cities](http://pobs.cc/1jhie)*, <http://pobs.cc/1jhie>
- PR 16 *[Learning to be as the core of learning in later life](http://pobs.cc/1jhie)*, <http://pobs.cc/1jhie>

Other PR papers are relevant to the subject of this report. These include:

- PR 9 *[Learning Initiatives to Connect the Urban and Rural](http://pobs.cc/1i5u3)*, <http://pobs.cc/1i5u3>
- PR 11 *[Big Data, Lifelong Learning and Learning Cities: Promoting city-discourse on social inequalities in learning](http://pobs.cc/1iwpa)*, <http://pobs.cc/1iwpa>
- PR 13 *[Learning Later: responding to the evolving educational needs of older people](http://pobs.cc/1j523)*, <http://pobs.cc/1j523>
- PR 17 *[A benchmarking approach to understanding community engagement and learning cities](http://pobs.cc/1ka56)*, <http://pobs.cc/1ka56>

Many of the current set of PR papers have been translated into Korean and Mandarin to facilitate circulation in China and Korea. It is intended to complete the series of PR papers up to 20 within a book collection of the papers, to be published by the Korean National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) during 2019, in Korean and English. PR papers may be at present accessed at the PASCAL website as indicated above. In completing the series it is intended to add PR papers on Artificial intelligence and Future Skills, Social capital, and Place-making. These will also be translated into the above languages.