



A Global Peer-Learning Network for Positive Ageing

The imperative emphasis is on LIFELONG – baby to 100 and over!

The Pass It On Network is a global peer-learning network of active ageing advocates. A year ago, as a recently accredited NGO, we submitted substantive comments for the Education topic titled, “The Best and Worst Times for Lifelong Learning.” Our comments responded to the ever-widening worldwide gaps in access to learning by focusing on the importance of universal Internet access. As illustrated by our Pass It On Network liaisons in 60+ countries, access to the Internet through a solar-powered smart phone or tablet is sufficient for everyone to develop or participate in a world-wide learning community.

Definition of the Goal: Lifelong Learning

The Pass It On Network sees that Lifelong Learning provides an overarching framework that illuminates and guides human development. This approach affirms the right of everyone to inclusive and readily accessible quality education throughout the life span. The capacity-building goal is to empower both independent and interactive lifelong learning that will enable all persons to adapt to the rapidly changing world and to live autonomous and independent lives, fulfill their aspirations, build their skills and capacities, develop their full human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and participate fully in a multi-generational, multi-cultural, multi-disciplinary society.

Implementation

Open it up and spread it out: the 60-Year Curriculum. The current system of for-credit education, operating in most developed countries, focuses on lockstep, age-segregated classroom learning in which students complete their secondary school graduation certificate, move on through four years of college for an undergraduate degree, and may then move on through graduate degree programs to professional careers that used to last a lifetime. A new “60-year curriculum” is now taking shape in the continuing education arm of universities, with the goal of developing a more nimble and affordable model for higher education.

“The real driver of the 60-year curriculum is the job market and length of life,” says Huntington D. Lambert, dean of continuing education and university extension at Harvard University.¹ “The employee of the future will have a new job every five years, probably for 60 to 80 years, and probably every one of those will require skills not now taught in college.” The 60-year model would encourage portable credentials that move with the student, varied ways for students to attend classes, and more support through advisors and coaches, financial aid, and life/work planning. The courses would be open

¹ Tugend, Alina. “Endless School: The idea that college education is over after four years is so yesterday.” *NY Times*. Sunday, October 13, 2019, p. 8, “Learning.”

to all, accessible to a wide range of learners, would not require an ongoing commitment, and would cost far less per credit.

Route to Internet Accessibility. Even now, life/work education could be available to older persons in both developed and developing countries via a plentiful variety of webinars and videos and data bases, etc..... if the residents, of any age, have smart

phones or tablets with access to electric power and the Internet and some technical support. However, as Hellenna Ziribagwa, our Pass It On liaison in Uganda, says, “In my country, Internet is very expensive and social media is taxed and smart phones and laptops are very expensive. Also, most rural areas don’t have access to power, and most old people think the Internet is for wasting time and it’s for young people.” Hellenna suggests that the first steps are to make the Internet free and phones affordable, with solar access for the energy source.

The potential for digital education is so great.... for economic development and intergenerational interaction and community development.... The Pass It On Network is committed to expanding Internet access with user support for older adults everywhere. We are eager to work with other NGOs to spread programs that empower lifelong learning.

Scope: Availability, Acceptability and Adaptability, Accessibility

The lack of reference to older persons in the 2018 Brussels Declaration on Global Education illustrates the importance of showing Normative Elements for Older Persons. The Pass It On Network applauds the paper titled “Normative Elements of the Right to Lifelong Learning, Education, and Skills Building,” developed by the GAROP Education/Technical Working Group. We believe that Statements 1.2 through 2.13 are excellent as they address the specific ways in which the rights of older persons can be expanded.

The original Article 13 of the United Nations Covenant recognized the right of everyone to receive an education. Given the pace of change and technological development, we would like to add “on-going” – but we’re still on the same path.