Volume 19 Issue 8
Originally issued as G2

Global Journal of human-social science: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 19 Issue 2 Version 1.0 Year 2019
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Intergenerational Learning and Social Capital in Choba Urban Indigenous Community in Port Harcourt Nigeria

By John M. Patrick, Dr. Chidi E. Onyenemezu & Ezihuo S. Olumatin

University of Port Harcourt

Abstract- This paper examines intergenerational learning an informal aspect of adult learning in an indigenous community. Intergenerational learning involves older people and young people where both are teachers and learners in a shared learning process. The study examines the pattern of intergenerational learning in urban indigenous community. What informed the conduct of this study is the increase intergeneration gap and perhaps the individualistic lifestyle that characterized urban indigenous communities. The study was carried out in Choba an urban settlement in Port Harcourt. To collect data, we conducted Focus Group Discussion and key personality interview in the study area. The findings reveal that intergenerational learning is reciprocal and empowering and can be used to foster social capital and social cohesion. It also shows that the three forms of intergenerational learning are applicable in the urban indigenous communities. These forms are transferred learning, transactional learning, and transformational learning.

Keywords: *indigenous, intergenerational, learning, traditional adults, social capital.*

GJHSS-G Classification: *FOR Code: 930199*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

© 2019. John M. Patrick, Dr. Chidi E. Onyenemezu, & Ezihuo S. Olumatin. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Intergenerational Learning and Social Capital in Choba Urban Indigenous Community in Port Harcourt Nigeria

John M. Patrick[α], Dr. Chidi E. Onyenemezu[σ], & Ezihuo S. Olumatin[ρ]

Abstract- This paper examines intergenerational learning an informal aspect of adult learning in an indigenous community. Intergenerational learning involves older people and young people where both are teachers and learners in a shared learning process. The study examines the pattern of intergenerational learning in urban indigenous community. What informed the conduct of this study is the increase intergeneration gap and perhaps the individualistic lifestyle that characterized urban indigenous communities. The study was carried out in Choba an urban settlement in Port Harcourt. To collect data, we conducted Focus Group Discussion and key personality interview in the study area. The findings reveal that intergenerational learning is reciprocal and empowering and can be used to foster social capital and social cohesion. It also shows that the three forms of intergenerational learning are applicable in the urban indigenous communities. These forms are transferred learning, transactional learning, and transformational learning.

Keywords: indigenous, intergenerational, learning, traditional adults, social capital.

I. Introduction

In urban indigenous communities there have been increasing generational gap among the indigenous people. The people have become more individualistic as a result of the penetration and adoption of industrial and capitalist values. This perhaps has resulted in the knowledge gap between the older generation and the younger generation in the areas of cultural, historical and social values, and on the other hand gap in technological knowledge and urban lifestyle. While the older generation lacks technological knowledge and urban lifestyle, the younger generation lacks cultural and historical knowledge of their community. The older generation is often regarded as an analogy while the younger generation is called digital and in recent time smart age. There is a change in their demographic characteristics resulting in a change in the generational relationship. This may influence the social, economic, cultural and political life of the people. These changes dictate the need for stronger intergenerational ties and a reduction in age segregation as well as the development of social capital. Furthermore, this may affect the way the old and the young generation will do things together in common good of the community with a high sense of cohesion, trust, and competence. Bridging this knowledge gap requires intergenerational learning while fostering community life among the indigenous people requires developing social capital.

Intergenerational learning emphasizes a transfer of knowledge between one age group and another in a community. This can take different forms such as when older adults are trained to look after children, senior citizens counsel vulnerable youth, older people are taught how to operate the computer by their grandchildren and grandparents accompany their grandchildren to museums or other places of cultural interest and religious sites. In other words, intergenerational learning promotes the purposeful exchange of knowledge between older and younger generations for individual and social benefits (Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako, 2001).

However, today the spatial separation of the nuclear family have resulted in fewer opportunities for intergenerational learning and support, and this makes the young and old increasingly vulnerable. Most young people do not have regular contact with the older members of their families, who could – with their experience and wisdom – offer support to the younger family members while they are growing up and learning. Due to the ever-rarer contacts with their younger family members, the grandparents do not have knowledge of contemporary social events, skills, and new technologies as well as the sense of belonging that they would receive from their younger family members if they lived physically closer. Both groups are losing valuable support that they can gain from one another according to Kumpk and Krasovec (2014).

Most literature on intergenerational learning focuses on non-family paradigm such as grandparents serving as school teachers or in the situation where both the elderly and the young people learn together. Some of the works include Newman and Hatton-Yeo, (2008), Hatton-Yeo, (2007), Hake (2014) and Zemaitaityte (2014). Thus there have been little or no studies on intergenerational learning and social capital in urban indigenous communities which examines the pattern of learning as well as how it fosters social capital among people of the different generation. To investigate the pattern of intergenerational learning and its effect on social capital in an urban indigenous community is the

Author: e-mail: john.patrick@uniport.edu.ng

© 2019 Global Journals

main thrust of this paper. This paper hopes to make a modest contribution to promoting this understanding by interrogating the extent to which people of a different generation are engaged in mutual learning and the implication of such in the development of social capital in an urban indigenous community in Nigeria. The question explored in this study is: what is the pattern of learning among people of different generations in the urban indigenous people and how does it foster the development of social capital?

The rest of the paper is made up of four parts. Immediately following this introduction is the review of related literature in intergenerational learning. After this, we attempt the explanation of methodology issues. Following the third section, is the analytical fulcrum of the paper. Here, we state the main findings and discuss it. In the fourth and final section is the discussion of the findings and the conclusions.

II. Literature Review

Intergenerational learning is a lifelong learning process through which people of an age grade engage in learning activities to acquire skills, knowledge, and sensitivities common to a particular generation other than theirs. Intergenerational learning is perhaps one way of addressing the significant demographic changes and the generational gap in 'greying' societies. It involves people from different age grade learning from each other and learning together. Intergenerational learning can foster reciprocal learning relationships between different age grades and helps to develop social capital and social cohesion in ageing societies, for both the young and the old. It can become a strategy for seeking to enhance intergenerational solidarity. Perhaps it is on the basis of this that Manheimer, Snodgrass, and Moskow-Mckenziee cited in Findsen and Formosa, (2011) assert that intergenerational learning is 'co-learning' involving people from different age grade in learning from one another and in collaborative learning ventures. Intergenerational learning is 'a social mechanism that creates a meaning and constant exchange of resources and learning between the older and younger generations' (Kaplan, 2002: 306). The goal of Intergenerational Learning is to establish ties between the young and the old.

Intergenerational learning is a form of lifelong learning as it is a teaching and learning activity which takes place all through the life of an individual. It is also a form of non-formal, informal and formal learning. According to Hake (2014), there are three main types of intergenerational learning practice. These are transfer, transactional, and transformative learning. Transfer learning concerns direct communication and acquisition of knowledge, skills, and sensitivities between generations. For example when young people teach elderly people to learn how to operate a cell phone or when a grandparent tells a story about his or herself to a grandchild. Transactional learning involves voluntary and mutual exchange of knowledge, skills, and sensitivities through learning such as organized and accidental learning that takes place in club and religious organizations between generations, while transformational learning refers to the mutual development of knowledge, skills, and sensitivities in self-organised learning communities based on commonly shared problems.

Intergenerational learning can arise in any range of contexts but generally from activities specifically designed to bring together younger and older adults in shared learning activities (Brown and Ohsako, 2003). These may include activities in which (a) at least two opposite generations learn together about each other (aging issues, experiences, values, aspirations), (b) two different generations learn together about the world, people and/or historical and social events that are relevant to them, and (c), two different age groups sharing learning experiences and training activities designed to develop academic knowledge and skills and prepare their social service skills. The aim of all of these possibilities is education - the process of acquiring new skills and information, gaining insight and knowledge.

Intergenerational learning programmes have an influence upon the participants as well as the immediate environment (i.e., local community). A plethora of literature exists on the effects of intergeneration learning on individual and the community. Fried et al., (2004); Goff, (2004) and Kaplan, (2002) have identified some of these effects. According to Krasovec, (2014) youths gain knowledge and skills (including social skills), grow emotionally, learn how to work in team, and develop empathy, creativity, initiative, and openness. The elderly are also positively influenced by intergenerational learning in the areas of their health, level of activity, and views of the younger generation. According to Krasovec, the symptoms of depression were reduced amongst the older adults who participated in intergenerational learning; also their ability to solve contemporary problems increased. Apart from these, the elderly also felt respected and received recognition for the contributions they made to the community as well as acknowledgment of their experience and achievements.

The benefits of intergenerational learning are numerous. First, it increases the quality of community life; for example, preservation of the local history, creation of folk art and culture, fostering a clean environment as well as community learning. Secondly, it enables community members to take responsibility, avoid stereotyping, increase contacts with neighbors and relatives, encouraging social cohesion and establish a more inclusive attitude. Thirdly, it promotes the formation of social networks, strengthen community

© 2019 Global Journals

ties and creates opportunities for volunteering (Kaplan, 2002; and Hake, 2014).

Intergenerational learning can take a different pattern. One of which is the family learning which is informal learning in which older family member such as parents or grandparents teach the children in the family values, skills and norms. The second pattern is intergenerational serve learning which entails older person mentoring and providing professional guidance to young people. The third pattern is share site learning where people of different generation met in associational and community context and to learn together.

III. Methodology

The researchers conducted qualitative survey in Choba community Port Harcourt in Rivers State Nigeria. The researchers choose Choba community because of the fact that Choba community is an indigenous settlement and since the sighting of the University of Port Harcourt in 1974 and the establishment of several companies including a multinational company like Welbros, the area has been fully engulfed in the growth process of Port Harcourt urban life. Choba is an indigenous settlement with full traditional apparatus and governance process. The indigenous people live side by side with the non-indigenous residents and members of the university community. In the Choba community, there are two major lifestyles, the traditional and urban western lifestyle. Both the older and the young generations live proximate to one another in the community and often interact in diverse ways. Thus, the Choba community is an appropriate arena for examining the pattern of intergenerational learning in urban indigenous settlements.

The instruments for data collection were the focus group discussion (FDG), key informant interview and observation. We conducted ten FDGs comprising of eight (8) persons in each of the group. Four sessions were for only young cohort, and the other four were for the older cohort. The remaining two groups were a mixture of both the old and young cohort. Regarding gender representation, in all of the ten FGD sessions, we try to ensure that there is an adequate representation of all sex. Each of the sessions lasted about 1-3 hours. We set out to have five men and five women in each of the group, although this was not possible in all the sessions as most women went to the farm or they are occupied with the domestic chore. The number of women who participated in the FDGs were either two to three. We also conducted three unstructured informant interview with the leadership of community governance institutions. We interviewed the Community Development Community (CDC) chairman and secretary, the youth chairman, and secretary and the leader of women union, and secretary. On the whole, the survey involved 106 persons out of which 50 persons were of the older cohort and 56 were a young cohort.

According to Findsen and Formosa (2011), the definition of older adult constitutes enormous contention. This is because physical manifestations of biological aging occur at chronological age in different persons, with the result that members of old cohorts are varied regarding senescence. However, some alternative ways have been adopted. Most social science literature put the older age as 60 whereas studies of the older adults in developing countries such as Africa taking note of the low life expectancy thus put the age of older adulthood as between 50 or 55 (World Health Organisation (WHO) 2010). By the WHO chronological age for older adult, we considered those from 55 years and above as an older generation and those from 54 years below as younger generation.

IV. Findings

There are various things which both the old and young generation learn from each in the urban indigenous community. The older generation teaches the young generation traditional value systems which they cannot learn at schools. These are the value of respect, traditional greeting patterns, social skills, and local craft. In the FGD some of the older generation participants pointed out that these days, the younger generation do not even greet as they use to do when they were young. They pointed out that when they fail to greet their elders, they will call them to order and instruct them how they should greet their elders base on the traditional ways. The elders use storytelling in impacting the age long traditional values and beliefs into the younger generation. The moonlight storytelling is beyond just been avenues of recreation and relaxation, the stories are awash with moral values and experiences of the past for transformative learning. It also brings about strong social ties and solidarity in the family among people of different generations.

In respect of songs and dancing style, the participant in the FGD pointed out that there is a wide generational gap. The older participants in the FGD pointed out that the type of songs and music played now is different from what obtained in their days. They pointed out that in the time past the songs contain moral message and social injunctions. They also pointed out that most people in their community no longer know how to sing in the local dialect. According to most of the older participants in the FGD, they teach the young generation local folk songs. Similarly, the older participants pointed out that they teach the young generation traditional dancing styles such as the *erabu* dance, the masquerade dance, the *okuruku* dance and the *egelege* dance. All of these dancing styles involves bodily movement, waist twisting and back and forth movement including the display of machete as in the

© 2019 Global Journals

case of masquerade. On the other hand, the young people in the FGD confirmed the areas being mentioned by the elders. The young participants in the FGD also pointed out that some older people still have a reminiscence of their youthful age and could still dance ragge and afro-juju music and high life. These various brands of music were called the old school by the youngsters. To the young generation, their kind of ragge is different while their music is more of pop, hip-pop, and rap with a different dancing style which some of the older people admire and still learn from them.

Furthermore, the older people teach the young generation the practice of traditional festivals such as the annual wrestling festival. This festival is a sporting and warfare festival. The older people teach the young people wrestling tactics and how to take a vintage position in the wrestling. The Osomin festival is preparatory to the new yam festival. The elders teach the young generation all the associated practice in the celebration of the various festivals.

On health care, the older generation is used to the use of herbs and roots a traditional orthodox medical care system other than the use of the western medical system. Older generation knows how to treat diseases such as malaria, cool, cough, treatment of pregnancy complication as well as massaging, and bone setting. On the other hands, the younger generation is more oriented toward the western medical system. They direct the older generation how to take their drugs according to the prescription. The young generation teaches the older people some common physio-therapeutic measures, discoveries in modern health care and the national health policy.

In the urban area people use modern gadgets such as electronics, phones, and household equipment. The study reveals that the older generation seems to belong to another extreme in this regard. The younger generation teaches older people how to use modern gadgets like phone, household equipment like macro-wave, musical sets, smart televisions, smart doors, computer, internet and so on.

Among the women, there is greater intergenerational learning among the two generations. The older generation teaches young mothers how to massage and tender little babies. The older people who assist working class nursing mothers to take care of their little babies are taught how to use modern kits for nursing babies such as breast milk extractor and breast milk preserver, baby wipers and how to take a baby temperature. The young women learn how to prepare local food delicacy from older people particularly the foods for pregnant women and nursing mothers, while they teach older people modern and international dish.

The traditional occupation of the indigenous people of Choba is farming and fishing. The increasing urbanization of the community and the extensive crude oil exploration has made both these occupations less attractive to the young generation. However, much of intergenerational learning occurs in this area. The younger people in the community learn from the older people how to farm such as the cultivation of yam, cassava, and vegetable which are major crops cultivated in the community. In the area of fishing, a few of the young people that are interested in fishing are taught how to paddle a canoe and cast different types of net. On the other hand, the older generation learns the act of fish farming from the young generation particularly from the younger people who out of lack of employment now engage in commercial fish farming. Also in the area of agriculture, there is reciprocal learning between the old and the young generation. Most young people for lack of employment embark on horticulture for commercial purpose, while the older people learn how to tender flower from the young generation and go into horticulture as a leisure and recreation.

V. Discussion of Findings

In urban indigenous communities in Nigeria, there are two antithetical issues that exist which make intergenerational learning inevitable. These are traditionalism and modernity. The older generation is seen as an embodiment and custodians of the traditional values, while the young generation is said to have modern and western values. Intergeneration learning provides a rich site of learning opportunities and opportunity for self-development and empowerment. There are many areas of intergenerational learning between the young people and the older people. First, the study reveals that the older generation is the custodians of the culture and values of the community and that through intergenerational learning these culture and values are transferred from one generation to another. The older people teach the younger people how to carry on traditional festivals such as the new yam festival and the wrestling festival. The study reveals that these festivals are sites of learning among people of different generations and the basis of development of social capital. The findings of this study conforms the assertion of Kaplan (2002) that various intergenerational learning is oriented towards increasing the quality of community life through the preservation of local history, folk, art, and culture. Similarly, the study affirms the observation of Kump and Krasovic (2014) that intergenerational learning ensures the transmission of values from one generation to another and promotes collaborative learning in the family. Kump et al. pointed out that values such as honesty, perseverance, responsibility, trustfulness, thriftiness, and preservation of family tradition are passed on to the younger generation through the process of intergenerational learning. The young people are also taught fearlessness by the older

© 2019 Global Journals

people. In the urban indigenous community like Choba, the act of courage and fearlessness is taught through the wrestling festival. The study also reveals that through intergenerational learning appropriate values and orientations are transferred from one generation to another usually through the process of storytelling. The older generation tells the young generation moonlight stories. Such stories are loaded with moral teachings and ethical values and social norms. Moonlight store telling is not just off farm leisure activities in a farming community that has turned urbanized but an avenue and site for learning.

The study reveals that there is reciprocity of learning between the old and young generations, there is an exchange of skills and knowledge across the diverse generation; to the young generation, they acquire traditional values, culture, and life skills from the older generations. To the older learners, they acquire new values such as the urban lifestyle, insight about urbanization, changing social structure and new technology. There is shared learning among the two cohorts and reciprocity as well as empowerment in the area of farming and fishing. Both cohorts learn from each other and become empowered as a result of the shared learning. The findings of this study goes to affirm further the fact that the intergenerational learning helps to bridge generational gap and to integrate people of diverse generation and so ensure social inclusion. It can be used to deal with isolation which is mostly suffered by the older generation; it can also be used to preserve the rich culture and cherished valued of a people.

The study reveals that through intergenerational learning the older people acquire digital knowledge. The older adults belong to analogy age while the young generation is digital age. So there is a wide technological gap between the two generations. The young generation is more receptive to technological changes than the older generation and is more competent in manipulating modern technology than the older generation. Thus the intergenerational learning provides the basis of technological literacy among the older generation. The study points out that the older people are taught by the younger people how to handle simple household appliance like the macro-wave, operate smart television, smart doors, operate computer and access the internet. This is why Findsen and Formosa (2011) citing Eagle asserts that intergenerational learning enables the older people access and utilize ICT and become digital literates.

The study also reveals that intergenerational learning empowers both the young and the elderly in taking up their new roles in the society. For the young mother through such learning, they learn to take care of their babies, and for the old women they find a new job as caregivers, and for the old papas, they become mentors for those hoping to take up community leadership.

VI. Conclusion

Intergeneration learning is inevitable in any society to bridge the knowledge gap and to transmit the most important skills, norms and values from one generation to another. Intergenerational learning promotes reciprocity between the old and the young in a system of shared learning. It often takes the form of non-formal, informal and formal learning involving older adults and young adults. In the urban indigenous community much of the intergenerational learning takes place in the family and community space, it is reciprocal as both cohort act as both teacher and learner in one hand. It is a rich source of personal development, social cohesion, social capital and empowerment in the community. Intergenerational learning in urban indigenous community takes the form of transfer learning, transactional leaning, and transformational learning. Both the family and the community space are sites of intergeneration learning.

References Références Referencias

1. Brown, R., & Ohsako, T. (2003). A study of intergenerational learning programmes for schools promoting international education in developing countries through the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Journal of Research in International Education. 2(2), 151–165.
2. Findsen, B & Formosa, M. (2011). Lifelong learning in later life: A handbook of older adult learning. Rotterdam: Sense Publication.
3. Fried, L. P., Carlson, C. M., Freedman, M., Frick, K. D., Glass, T. A., Hill, J., McGill, S., Rebok, G. W., Seeman, T., Tielsch, J., Wasik, B. A., & Zeger, S. (2004). A social model for health promotion for an aging population: Initial evidence on the experience corps model. Journal of Urban Health, Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine, 81(8), 64-78.
4. Goff, K. (2004). Senior to senior: Living lessons. Educational Gerontology, 30(3), 205-217.
5. Kaplan, M. S. (2002). Intergenerational programs in schools: Considerations of form and function .International Review of Education, 48(5), 305-334.
6. Kumpk, S., & Krasovec, S. J. (2014). Intergenerational learning in different contexts. In B. Schmidt-Hertha, J. S. Krasovec, & M. Formosa (eds.) learning across generations in Europe: Contemporary issues in older adult education. Rotterdam: Sense Publication, 167-179.
7. Hake, I. (2014). What grows in garden? Perspectives on intergenerational learning in urban space. In contexts. In B. Schmidt-Hertha, J. S. Krasovec, & M. Formosa (eds.) learning across generations in Europe: Contemporary issues in older adult education. Rotterdam: Sense Publication, 155-167.

© 2019 Global Journals

8. Hatton-Yeo, A. (2007). Intergenerational practice: Active participation across the generations. Stoke on Trent: Beth Johnson Foundation.
9. Hatton-Yeo, A., & Ohsako, T. (ed.). (2001). Intergenerational programmes: Public policy and research implications an international perspective. Stoke-on Trent: The Beth Johnson Foundation
10. Newman, S., & Hatton-Yeo, A. (2008). Intergenerational learning and the contributions of older people. Aging Horizons, 8, 31-39.
11. WHO (2010). Definition of an older or elderly person. Retrieved October 6, 2014, from http:// www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/ageingdefnolder/en/index.html
12. Zemaitaityte, I. (2014). Older adilts as active members of Non-Governmental Organisation. In contexts. In B. Schmidt-Hertha, J. S. Krasovec, & M. Formosa (eds.) learning across generations in Europe: Contemporary issues in older adult education. Rotterdam: Sense Publicati.

© 2019 Global Journals