

Older adults' well-being: The contributions of education and learning

The 9th Conference of the ESREA Research Network on

Education and Learning of Older Adults (ELOA)

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Algarve

Faro, Portugal, 11-13 October 2018

Introduction

Well-being tends to be seen as a vague concept that includes too many perspectives, approaches, relations with other concepts, and ways of measuring or qualifying. To foster well-being has been considered as the final aim of a vast range of policies, sometimes targeting older adults. We can discuss well-being departing from very different scientific fields and question whether our practices as adult educators have an influence on older adults' well-being. To take a focus on well-being in our scientific meeting seems appropriate to reach two main goals: first, it is sufficiently broad so that we can include most of the ongoing research processes on older adults. Secondly, it is a way to call for the scientific community reflection capacity, so to contribute to a clearer and rigorous understanding of the meanings of well-being later in life.

The World Health Organization (2012) proposes a definition of well-being that considers two dimensions, subjective and objective. It comprises the individual's life experience as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values. In a way, we all look to subjective well-being as an explicit or implicit goal throughout our lives. Various types of subjective well-being seem to predict health and longevity, the quality of social relationships, and positive work outcomes (DeNeve, Diener, Tay, & Xuereb, 2013).

In the last decades, there is a growing concern with the quality of life in its relations with ageing processes. A significant number of researchers, social workers and adult educators aim to design interventions which have a positive impact on successful ageing processes. This would advise an increased efficiency in determining which factors are more relevant to the quality of life of older adults. Therefore, several researchers have developed ways to measure subjective well-being, which have been used broadly in different countries (e.g. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Diener et al., 1985; Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; the WHOQOL, which measures the quality of life (QoL), Power et al., 2005). Measuring well-being is important in many situations and can help us draw "the big picture". However, the inherent subjectivity included in all dimensions of well-being would advise us also to use qualitative approaches, in combination (or not) with quantitative methods. For many contexts involving older adults, biographical research, for example, allows capturing the richness of subjective meanings and memory, experience, the importance of rebuilding histories, the close connections between individual biographies and social life and, last but not least, the complexity within social life, education, and learning later in life.

Despite the fact that we want to include in our collective debate, in this meeting, every dimensions of well-being, we cannot forget the centrality of education in learning processes. Both practices and research in adult education have been showing that learning later in life conveys an enormous potential to participants. Not only as promoter of healthier life styles or fighting the natural effects of the ageing processes, but also as a

promoter of an active ageing which, through participation, helps to improve communities and societies. This does not mean that we have achieved a solid body of knowledge from education and learning. It only means that basic assumptions have been stressed by research in the last decades, but there is still a lot to do. The benefits of education and learning for well-being are a mere departure point that opens up a variety of new possibilities to policy, research or action. As Field (2009) states, the implications are immense:

A focus on well-being presents significant challenges to public policy, to providers, and to learners themselves. It suggests the following: The evidence that learning promotes well-being is overwhelming. This has huge implications in a society that is experiencing unprecedented levels of stress, mental illness and anxiety about the future – combined with the adoption of public policies that require individuals to take responsibility for planning against future risk. Learning providers must make much more of their contribution to well-being, as well as promoting the well-being of their own staff. (p. 5).

More than to be confident in what we already accomplished as a community, we should look for the numerous gaps and unattained research and action problems ahead. The conference will deal with the following themes:

- Theoretical approaches on older adults' well-being, quality of life and related concepts.
- Well-being and policy/ social policy.
- Analysing the older adults' well-being, in all its dimensions and through different methodological approaches
- Educational and learning experiences: contributions to the well-being of older adults.

Call for papers and workshops

The abstract should be maximum 500 words long and include a title and 4 keywords. Please send a separate file with the author(s) name(s), institutional affiliation and contact details, indicating which authors are going to be present at the conference.

If you want to propose a workshop, please use the file containing the authors' data to state the requirements of space, facilities or equipment that would be needed.

Groups of authors willing to organise round-tables/symposiums should contact the organisation prior to submitting the abstract.

All abstracts should be submitted by email to António Almeida (aalmeida@ualg.pt) and Sandra Valadas (svaladas@ualg.pt), by 25 May 2018. Acceptance of papers/workshops will be confirmed by 15 June 2018.

If accepted for presentation, final versions of papers (no more than 6,000 words including references) must be submitted by 21 September 2018, also via email. Please use Times New Roman, 12 and the APA (American Psychological Association) reference system, 6th edition.

Conference Fees

- ESREA members: 120 €
- APCEP members: 120 €
- Non-ESREA members: 170 €
- Students: 50 €

Conference fee includes the digital Conference Proceedings and refreshments.

The method of payment will be explicit in the second call for papers/register form.

ESREA offers two bursaries of 250 € each for PhD students attending the conference, provided they contribute with a paper. To be eligible to apply, students need to be ESREA members (individual or institutional membership). PhD students should declare their willingness to apply when sending the final version of paper. In this case, the email should be addressed to aalmeida@ualg.pt / svaladas@ualg.pt, but also to Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha - bernhard.schmidt-hertha@uni-tuebingen.de

PhD students are to use the bursary money in expenses related to this conference (accommodation, flight, etc.) up to the limit of 250 €. ESREA will refund these expenses against the presentation of receipts. PhD students willing to apply to this bursary are therefore advised to do it earlier.

Important dates

Dead-line	Action	Additional Comments
25 May 2018	Submission of abstracts	Send to aalmeida@ualg.pt and svaladas@ualg.pt
15 June 2018	Acceptance of abstracts confirmed	
30 June 2018	Registration	Please book your accommodations as soon as possible (*)
21 September 2018	Final papers must be submitted	Send to aalmeida@ualg.pt and svaladas@ualg.pt .
11-13 October 2018	Conference at Faro, Portugal	

(*) – The region of Algarve is increasingly visited by tourists and it can be difficult to find appropriate accommodations. Participants are therefore encouraged to make reservations the earliest possible and **not** wait until the 15th of June to do it.

About ESREA

ESREA is a European scientific society. It was established in 1991 to provide a European-wide forum for all researchers engaged in research on adult education and learning and to promote and disseminate theoretical and empirical research in the field. The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults promotes and disseminates theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult learning in Europe through research networks, conferences and publications.

ESREA provides an important space for the (re)definition of adult education and learning in relation to research, theory, policy and practice to be reflected upon and discussed. A significant part of the periodic scientific debates is made through the meetings organised

by ESREA research networks. ESREA also organised a triennial conference – the next will be in 2019, September – and runs the European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of the Adults (RELA).

The University of Algarve

The University of Algarve is a young Portuguese public HEI located in the southern region of Portugal, the Algarve, having three campi in Faro and one campus in Portimão. With about 8.000 students, including over 1.600 graduate students, the University of Algarve has teaching and research as its core activities in different scientific areas: science and technology, management and economics, natural sciences, social sciences, health, medicine and biomedicine. The University of Algarve operates 55 undergraduate and 97 postgraduate courses (72 master's and 25 doctoral programmes), with about 700 permanent teaching and research staff who developed a significant number of research projects. Among its faculty and alumni activities, the University of Algarve has well-established research centres in several fields such as marine sciences, biomedicine, electronics, chemistry, arts and communication and social sciences.

APCEP

(Portuguese association for culture and permanent education)

Eight years after the revolution of 25 April 1974, some citizens decided to meet under the banner of Permanent Education, so that this concept and the practices it inspired would guide Portugal towards a more knowledgeable, supportive, creative and participatory society. After very active initial years, APCEP decayed. Fortunately, in June 2014, a number of APCEP founding members decided to revive the association and consolidate its structures and management. As in 1982, education for all, and at every age and context, continues to be indispensable. More than ever, permanent education must contribute to the integrated and integral formation of adults, promoting culture and citizenship.

References

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