

DIG/Culture

project

Arts and Culture programme



DIGICulture – Bridging Generations Through Digital Cultural Exploration

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Workshop 1 – Working with seniors





Working with Seniors

Workshop for Youth

DIGICulture – Working with seniors

Content

This presentation introduces following

- Definition of the 66+ Learner
- Characteristics of the 66+ Learner
- Social Context and Learning
- Creating an Inclusive Environment
- Addressing Psychological Barriers
- Building a Supportive Environment
- Technological Support and Adaptation
- Links to Digital tours





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Definition of the 66+ Learner

Definition of the 66+ Learner The term "66+ learner" encompasses a wide range of individuals at different stages of later adulthood.

Some may still be working full-time or part-time, while others may be retired. Educational needs in this group can vary substantially.

For example, those still in the workforce may pursue further education to remain competitive in their fields, while retirees might seek learning opportunities that align with their hobbies, such as history, art, or technology.

Additionally, this group includes a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, health statuses, and educational histories, which requires a flexible and individualized approach to learning.

Some older learners might already possess a high level of education but are looking to explore new areas of interest, while others may be engaging in structured education for the first time.



Characteristics of the 66+ Learner

Motivations: for older adults, the motivations for learning tend to focus less on professional advancement and more on intellectual curiosity, social engagement, and maintaining cognitive health. Many older learners participate in education for the sheer enjoyment of learning something new or for personal fulfilment, especially as their responsibilities related to work or family life decrease.

Learning preferences: older adults often prefer self-directed learning, allowing them to follow their own interests and learn at their own pace. In addition, many prefer group learning environments where they can share and discuss their life experiences. This cohort tends to be practical in its approach, seeking education that has real-world applications, even if it's within the context of personal interests like travel, technology, or history.

Characteristics of the 66+ Learner

Cognitive considerations: while many older adults maintain robust cognitive functioning well into later life, others may experience changes that affect their learning process, such as slower information processing or difficulties with memory retention.

Educators should use teaching methods that reinforce new information in multiple ways, such as through discussion, repetition, and practical application. Breaking down complex tasks into manageable steps can also make learning more accessible.



Characteristics of the 66+ Learner

Digital literacy: as digital learning becomes increasingly prevalent, older adults may face barriers related to technology use.

Many in this age group are less familiar with new technologies, though this is changing as digital tools become more widespread.

Providing technological support, such as introductory courses in digital literacy, is vital for ensuring that older learners can participate fully in modern education environments.

Once equipped with the necessary skills, many older adults find that technology opens new doors for learning, enabling them to access a wealth of online resources

Social Context and Learning

Older adults often face changes in their social networks as they retire or experience shifts in their family dynamics. Education can provide an important social outlet, offering opportunities to meet new people and maintain meaningful social connections. Lifelong learning also supports emotional well-being by providing a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Learning later in life could help connecting with people from different age groups, such as younger students or teachers. These connections make learning more interesting by sharing different ideas and experiences and also might help breaking down stereotypes about aging. Learning also keeps the mind active, improving skills like memory, problem-solving, and clear thinking.



Creating an Inclusive Environment

Older adults often bring a wealth of life experience into the learning environment, which can enrich the educational process for everyone involved. Educators must recognise the value of this experience and create learning environments where older adults feel valued, respected, and included.

Group learning settings, for example, can be enhanced by the varied perspectives and insights that older learners contribute, offering younger participants an opportunity to learn from these experiences as well.

However, creating an inclusive environment goes beyond simply acknowledging experience. It also requires recognising the potential vulnerabilities that some older learners may face, such as anxiety about returning to education after a long hiatus or concerns about keeping up with younger, possibly more tech-savvy peers.



Addressing Psychological Barriers

One of the key challenges faced by educators working with older adults is overcoming psychological barriers to learning. Some learners may feel that they are "too old" to engage in education or may lack confidence in their ability to succeed in a new learning environment.

These feelings can be rooted in self-doubt or societal stereotypes about aging and learning, and they often prevent older adults from exploring new educational opportunities.

Educators are in a unique position to help older learners overcome these barriers by promoting a growth mind-set. They can reassure learners that it is never too late to learn new skills or pursue new interests, and that education in later life can be a deeply rewarding, transformative experience.

By fostering a positive, learner-centred environment, educators can help build the confidence and motivation that older adults need to embrace new challenges and continue their personal development journey.

Building a Supportive Environment

Supportive and encouraging environment must be welcoming and inclusive, ensuring that older learners feel comfortable and confident in their ability to succeed. Several key elements contribute to a supportive learning environment: Positive reinforcement: older learners often benefit from positive reinforcement and encouragement.

Many adults aged 66+ may have been away from education for a long time and may lack confidence in their ability to learn new things.

Educators can provide ongoing support by celebrating the learner's progress, offering constructive feedback, and reinforcing the idea that learning is a lifelong process. Peer support and group learning: group-based learning environments can be particularly valuable for older adults, as they provide opportunities for social interaction and peer support.

Offering flexible learning options, such as part-time courses, online learning, or self-paced study, allows learners to choose the format that best suits their lifestyle and learning preferences.

Technological Support and Adaptation

Technology plays an increasingly important role in education, and many older learners need additional support to develop the digital skills required to participate fully in online learning or to use digital tools effectively.

Educators must be prepared to offer both technical support and guidance on how to navigate the digital landscape. Offering digital literacy training: many learners aged 66+ may not have had extensive exposure to modern digital tools or online learning platforms. Providing basic digital literacy training can help bridge this gap, ensuring that learners feel confident using computers, accessing online courses, and participating in virtual discussions.

Encouraging lifelong learning through technology: technology can open up new avenues for lifelong learning, enabling older adults to access educational resources from the comfort of their homes.



Thank you!