



PASCAL Inclusion Workshop — *Seniors as Lifelong Learners: barriers, strategies, outcomes* **RMIT University — 30 November 2015**

Introduction

This workshop was part of an *Inclusion* series within the Learning City Networks (LCN) of the PASCAL International Observatory, coordinated and facilitated by Peter Kearns, Director of the PASCAL LCN program. Throughout 2015, there have been active responses organised on pertinent themes concerned with this strand of interest as follows:

- May Townsville (Queensland, Australia) *Inclusion in Learning City Development: Local and Global*
- September Glasgow (Scotland, UK) *The Role of the Smart Campus in Inclusion*
- November Bristol (England, UK) *Learning for Everyone*
 - *Supporting Young People Leaving Care into Education and Employment*
 - *Improving Adult Mental Health through Community Learning*
- November Melbourne (Victoria, Australia) *Seniors as Lifelong Learners: Barriers, Strategies, Outcomes*

Aspects of this series will be profiled during the 13th PASCAL International Conference: *Learning Cities 2040 – Global, Local, Connected, Sustainable, Healthy and Resilient*, 3-5 June 2016 at the University of Glasgow. Challenges and opportunities for cities into the future for development and learning will feature across the five Learning City Networks themes of: *Addressing Disadvantage to Build Inclusive Learning Cities, Implementing an EcCoWell Approach, Connecting Urban and Rural Initiatives, Harnessing Cultural Policies in Building Sustainable Learning Cities, and Entrepreneurial Learning Cities*: <http://lcn.pascalobservatory.org/>.

Key Issues and Current Practice

The first panel comprised presentations from Professor Philip Taylor (National Seniors Australia), Karyn Siegmann (Libraries, Family & Cultural Services, Bayside City Council), and Professor Barry Golding (Federation University).

In drawing from a recently published study from the **National Seniors** Productive Ageing Centre, *Never Too Late To Learn: Learning, education and training among mature age Australians* (2015), investment in human capital was the driver. While the focus was the retention or return to work for the older cohort of those aged 50+, this workforce orientation did seek responses to engagement in lifelong learning, mainly as a mechanism to support labour force participation. However, the importance of lifelong learning was rated most highly for personal enjoyment/fulfilment against gain employment, get a better job and gain promotion factors. This reinforces the crucial role of the social and wider benefits of learning in enhancing quality of life with improved socialisation, cognitive stimulation and mental health.

Overall, Taylor advised it was more commonly women, aged 50-59, on the highest personal income, with highest education levels and in manager/professional occupations who attempted to access (39%) and undertake (40%) learning, education and training (LET), over the previous three years.

The main barriers to LET perceived, also drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics data, were that they didn't need to, didn't think it would help and didn't have time. Other variables were employer attitudes (i.e. lack of emotional or financial support), language issues, lack of access to care-giving or transportation, financial difficulties, fear of unfamiliar training environments, previous poor experiences, competition with younger/better educated others, and negative attitudes (i.e. self-doubt about one's own ability to succeed). Negative employer attitudes towards mature age workers perpetuated discrimination, thus requiring change through their professional development as well. The evolving nature of work, workforce casualisation and the "people cloud" approach were seen as areas requiring adaptability by seniors to enhance their productivity and engagement.

Libraries have a great connection to the public, and senior audiences are major participants-users in service offerings. Siegmann surveyed what was happening for older learners through libraries across Victoria and highlighted a wide range of opportunities taken-up, especially in the fields of technology, digital literacy and makerspaces.

The Federal Government/Telstra funded *Tech Savvy Seniors* and the Telstra/Victorian Department of Health *Seniors Connect* partnerships have been worthwhile to engage an older cohort in the provision of new knowledge and practice with programs, apps and devices. Free training at library branches as well as in situ at residential aged care facilities or with staff/volunteers to housebound individuals have supplemented these initiatives and those of the library itself. Other seniors' programs include: Virtual Visitor Pilot (skype, ebooks, armchair travel, eaudio, learning to play a musical instrument, social media, newspaper/journals, etc.), Tech Time Weekly (problem solving), Device Advice (monthly drop-in service), IT Training (formal classes inclusive of seniors), and Intergenerational Computer Training (with youth services and schools providing tutors).

Attracting predominately seniors into general public programs, or as specifically targeted, were other enrichment oriented classes that also incorporated social and informal learning elements, such as Local History/Heritage, Let's Talk Books, Film Screenings, Tai Chi, Words on Wheels (storytelling and reminiscences held at aged care and senior citizen centres) and other outreach services. A variety of seniors' organisations have been sourced and individuals invited to the library for socialisation activities (e.g. book selection or afternoon tea). Then, there continue the one-off workshops, speaker programs and clubs that cover a wide range of topics: literary, craft, writing, language, brain health, bibliotherapy to conversation. Reports on initiatives are available at: <http://www.plvn.net.au/>.

In the future, securing more resources for best practice, keeping up with demand (especially for technology courses), ensuring consistency and catering to segments within the senior ages (including the 'less easy' higher age end of the continuum) will be imperative. It was considered more could be done around content seniors can offer, better utilising the wealth of experience/skills of seniors, developing wider intergenerational programming, ascertaining progressive needs, maintaining social connectivity, and promoting throughout the services and agencies that seniors access.

Golding, **Federation University**, brought to us a blended academic and personal approach (enriched through his Adult Learning Australia and Mens' Sheds leadership) to be, as he termed, "deliberately provocative". We were advised that generally, the only older learning available was where seniors enrolled in a fee-for-service course and how such programs were offered in a patronising way as if such citizens were ignorant or illiterate! Charting the demise of funded adult education/learning and the "false hopes" built through the compromised VET system; two writers in the field were identified as influential lifelong learning champions: Gorard (British sociologist specialising in the evaluation of education as a lifelong process, focussed on issues of equity and effectiveness) and Cooper (responsible for the team producing the GO-Science [2008] report *Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the most of ourselves in the 21st century* which stated *a new mindset is needed: involving a rethink of "older age", and addressing the stigma associated with it*).

Sharing accumulated knowledge and having access to remain connected in society for as long as possible were envisaged as essential in the senior years. The interaction and informal/incidental learning achieved through Men's Sheds whereby the model of provision moved away from formal approaches in being a community space highlighted that:

- The attraction was through stereotypical male behaviours (e.g. mateship, hands-on skills);
- Power relationships were changed with a self-run, organic, collective, flat 'organisational structure'; and
- Men became agents in their own transformation.

Acknowledging that men (and boys) were missing out on options, identity issues were paramount in that post-work there were limited opportunities for men to purposefully engage as formal systems do not reach the bulk of potential clients. However, through the openness of Mens' Sheds, participants enjoy personal and community wellbeing with the social determinants of positive health vital. These matters can be further explored through Golding's two books: (2013) *Men Learning Through Life* and (2015) *The Men's Shed Movement: The company of men*. MOOCs and the University of the Third Age engagement of course are on offer, but are known to attract the already well educated. The Nordic countries were upheld as the aspired, and inspired, approach to lifelong learning.

At the end of this presentation, we were asked who misses out, why, and what are we doing about how to 'get in' those who have 'missed out'. From the audience, we were also asked the ongoing question regarding not connecting within the latter years and thus why don't we have an Australian Lifelong Learning Policy?

What Can Learning Communities and Cities Contribute?

In the second panel, what really happens in actual Melbourne-area learning communities were selected for profiling by Peter Blunden (Melton Learning Community), Andre Dumitriu (Hume Global Learning Village) and Christine McAllister (Brimbank Learning Community).

Melton (a fast growing urban area) implemented its lifelong learning strategy in 1999 and established a process to 'get everyone together' via a Learning Board, dedicated to the mission of being a *learning city generating lifelong learning opportunities to grow our community's social, cultural, economic, environmental and personal wellbeing*. Working committees realise the vision, with the main interests of economic development and social inclusion through an implementation structure that outlines governance, delivery vehicles and projects/initiatives. The Community Learning Plan tackles various themes towards identified priorities and intended outcomes, seeking to achieve a "collective impact". Other themes are children, youth, adults and advocacy. The intended outcome for the Adults (inclusive of Seniors) theme is to ensure adults can *actively access learning for self-development, employment, leisure and social activity*.

To assess outcomes, measures are taken that identify impact and process indicators. In this instance the actions out of the lifelong learning strategy have been 2% increases in those promoting courses through the Melton City Council *Learning Directory*, both in enrolment for neighbourhood house offerings and Learn Local courses. Blunden suggested that local government can provide learning place spaces for organisations and learning hubs/centres, create collaborations/partnerships, and support grants for coordinators/projects in specific initiatives for the 'greater good'.

Multiple partnerships have been fostered with various community organisations, non-government agencies and education institutions. However, there is strong representation through Melton's Mens' Shed provisions and the Council's Active Ageing program. The nature of activities for living longer and stronger are broad in scope: health forums, DIY projects, bike riding, walking (lifestyle, chair, Nordic), cooking, gardening/landscaping, yarning, bus trips, tai chi, computer/internet, indoor games, yoga, foodie/coffee, to other planned learning groups (such as the older worker transitions for former Toyota employees). There are also special projects building on existing skills and capabilities, exemplified in the hallmark intergenerational understanding through art, community connection, and relationship with Youth Now for a "pass it on" approach to share IT skills while receiving mentoring. Please see more details at: http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Out_n>About/Libraries_and_learning/Learning/Community_Learning_Plan.

Dumitriu introduced himself as the "technology guy" at the **Hume** City Council, but actively engaged in the Hume Global Learning Village (HGLV) and coordinates one of the two neighbourhood houses in the Broadmeadows area. He described the 'pollinator' role of bringing people together in an 'amoeba-like' process to create an entity of engagement. The HGLV has been the Australian 'lighthouse' exemplar for instituting a lifelong learning city approach, especially in a demographic that indicates low socio-economic status, significant numbers of migrant/refugee communities and languages, and other fields of disadvantage. Program examples are plentiful.

There is rich documentation on lifelong learning strategies into action under the Social Justice Charter of (and the Community Learning Department within) Council, through the "Learning Together" forward strategies and with "Imagine, Explore, Discover" and email "Village Voice" publications. The strategy has encompassed community, businesses, providers, and the Council's Social Development, Economic Development, Aged Services and Youth Services units: http://www.hume.vic.gov.au/Libraries_Learning/Hume_Global_Learning_Village/About_the_Village/Learning_Together_Strategies. Infrastructure included an Advisory Board in the initial ten years of development, with a local representative Committee continuing to support the community generation and implementation of initiatives.

Having the HGLV centre with libraries brought out one of the main issues to overcome: how to engage the disenfranchised who do not commit to new environments or undertakings for learning. So, the implementers went mobile to where people congregated - safe and familiar places such as religious centres to football grounds which became the points of interest where learning opportunities took place, using IT as a vehicle. Thus, PCs, ipads, converting data to CDs, how to use Excel (e.g. creating databases for recipes) were the connection starters. Fifty computers are given away every year to those in need. The Net Health program involves 1:1 tuition on computer basics with 80 volunteers and 14 trainers to conduct programs in all sorts of locations. The strength of Council is in knowing the community. And, as the 'pollinators', those involved in service are the link to understanding what is going on, where there are influences, how not to compete but work with resources and capacity, value add, and to find new ways of making connections. Learning cities can be an abstract concept, but at the end of the day "it is about providing for people surviving in the real world".

As Melbourne's population grows, McAllister advised **Brimbank** is becoming known as the "inner west". There are issues of high migrant and refugee settlement (54% speak a language other than English at home) and un/under-employment and poverty (unemployment is at 10% with pockets of 30%). The traditional work sector is changing as manufacturing is in decline. However, there is strength seen in this diversity with over 150 languages spoken and 44% who speak English and another language very well compared with 24% in greater Melbourne. With this context, and the education profile of a low socio-economic area, the Council sought to overcome the challenges by improving such issues with better learning participation rates across all ages. To this end, the Brimbank Community Learning Strategy was adopted 2010-13 with 56 indicators for priority action. Evaluated in 2013, a second Strategy was set in place for 2014-17 to retarget key foci.

Under the aegis of the Council's Social Justice Charter, the Brimbank Learning and Employment Steering Committee was established with an external Chair. Viewing education as the "protective factor" for other positive life aspects (better health, more civic participation, lower gambling rates, improved personal fulfilment, etc.), the Committee works to their various strengths as a collective whole to implement, analyse and achieve fundamental and transformative actions for positive social and economic change.

A new *Learning in Brimbank* portal is being created, but the guiding principles that underpin the Strategy can be found at: http://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/COUNCIL/Council_Policies_Strategies_and_Plans/Council_Strategies/Brimbank_Community_Learning_Strategy_2014%E2%80%9317. Seniors are grouped into the adult sector of 25 years and above, and in building neighbourhoods as learning communities, it is seen as an essential to provide flexible and accessible learning opportunities through to later life.

To enable this outreach and provision, the library is valued as the central, pro-active force that can bring people together through its resources and activities. Libraries are community-focussed, unique as neutral spaces, vibrant learning hubs and possess committed staff to assist the individual, intergenerational and group needs of seniors with formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities. The Council investment in lifelong learning continues with the new Sunshine Library and Community/Civic Centre opening next year, and the Education Development Hub being planned.

Question time raised concerns about resourcing levels that are being reduced; libraries are 'picking up the slack' because services are dropping off elsewhere (e.g. defunding of teacher librarians, inadequate schooling exits, pre-accreditation preparations...) and thus the greater burden on libraries to cater to all their clienteles, especially with ageing populations.

What is Missing?

Exploring this investigation were panellists Dr Helen Kimberley (Brotherhood of St Laurence), Stephen Dunn (Adult Learning Australia) and Professor Michael Osborne (University of Glasgow).

Kimberley launched a finding from the **Brotherhood of St Laurence** project, (2014) *Knowhow for Later Life*, which noted older Australians were reportedly keen to be well informed and autonomous in managing their lives, but can be reluctant to participate in education programs or perceive themselves as learners. They were aware, however, that further knowledge and skills (i.e. "knowhow") were required in later life *to engage successfully in the complex social, technological and economic environment of the 21st century*.

Complicating matters among massive choice was also the impact of managing consumer directed care as seniors age and they may be in positions of disadvantage regarding homelessness, receiving care in an aged centre to suffering loneliness ("greater potential to kill than tobacco"). Here, we looked at the importance of 'linking capital' within the norms and values of social capital to establish connections, webs of relationships and engage in exchange. Barriers exist in securing the opportunities to be informed (though becoming well informed does mean having to learn) when many seniors still fear institutional learning, even being intimidated by school-based evening classes. Neighbourhood houses as sources for gaining information and learning have been less threatening. In giving the example of egovernment with 80% of services online by 2017, Kimberley used the term 'dynamic coalescence' to describe the need for seniors to seek knowledge in adapting and responding to changes in the world in which they live.

With knowhow acquired through social exchange, older Australians in an increasingly detached and isolating society, need ongoing opportunities to connect. What can be missing for a greater number are the means of accessing learning opportunities because of factors such as packages that keep one in home-care, limited mobility, to poor public transport. Personalised contact is essential in a just and equitable society, enabling "learning for life, life for learning".

The opening question from Dunn of **Adult Learning Australia** (ALA) upon hearing preceding great ideas was “Who is going to pay for it?” Education has become a tradeable commodity and the nature of the workforce is changing for seniors still in it. While foundation skills will be needed, the Committee for Economic Development of Australia’s (CEDA) report on *Australia’s Future Workforce* (2015), examines the high probability that 40% could be replaced by automation in the next 10 to 20 years. It is older Australians seeking work who have longer periods of unemployment than their younger counterparts. Dunn also referred to CISCO Systems, responsible for *The Learning Society* (2010) document in which new forms and a new morality in learning were called for, termed a “climate change” for education, with global improvements for lifelong learning opportunities demanded. The need for a better life will remain, despite advancing change and years.

For older Australians, once out of school a non-threatening and positive return to learning is critical. With little funding, creating an environment that is safe and accepting is essential. Adult educators know this, but do others? In the storytelling of ALA’s *Quest* magazine or that given by awardees and panellists in this year’s international Adult Learners’ Week, it was seen that gaps still exist in Australia for the ‘right people’ knowing and understanding the benefits of lifelong learning. Governments at all levels need to know where support is required to strengthen such learning opportunities and we were encouraged to keep telling the stories.

Many seniors are those who run clubs in their own communities and it has been found that a call for updated governance measures is desperately needed to be heeded. The changing world of risk, safety and directorship has been an impost on the more informal associations of the past. Related training enabling the self-management of joining together for mutual interests, suggests the intricate impacts of maintaining age-friendly communities.

Two additional items were announced in response to questions:

1. The first Australian Commissioner for Senior Victorians will be reporting to government at the end of 2015 on *how to develop a stronger service system and community supports so that all seniors can have access to fulfilling lives*.
2. Metrics exist (42 measures) to guide and assess the features of a learning city, as developed by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, initial detail is available at:
http://learningcities.uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/content/Publications/Conference/Introductory_Note_of_Key_Features_EN.pdf

As Chair of Adult and Lifelong Learning, Osborne is a co-investigator in the Urban Big Data Centre at **Glasgow University**, operating with partner universities on an Economic and Social Research Council investment. What he says is missing is good data and getting data on a regular basis right. This is an innovative and methodical approach collating data to address complex city challenges. Amassing data on three fronts of variety, velocity and volume, the objective is to ultimately find novel solutions and provide high quality training that responds to cutting-edge research re data sources.

Within the overall Centre, Glasgow University is responsible for the *Integrated Multi-media City Data Project* which will undertake household surveys, track life logs and sensing data, capture social media memories, and follow participants’ access to life events by GPS. Within the household surveys, items measured will be demographics, attitudes/values, literacy/knowledge, and behaviours (sustainability, transport, education/skills, cultural/civic activities, ICT/technology). Other existing education-related survey data will be incorporated. By bringing all these data sets together (e.g. twitter heat maps monitoring what are current topics of interest to the National Adult Learning Survey), Osborne advised that toolkits will be developed on how agencies can use these data to strengthen public and private services and support.

Extracting an educational emphasis out of the data feeding into the ‘joint information network’ (JANET), it is expected that vital information will be developed on learning that is lifelong, formal, informal, non-formal, family related, with attitudes towards learning and literacies (English, foreign language, maths/financial, health, environmental) mapped. Findings thus far indicate that the age 60+ partakers in the survey exhibited the lowest levels of educational pursuits, therefore a subset of socially and technologically engaged older “learner-citizens” would be sought. In addition, another project has emerged to follow on in developing *new understandings of the drivers of place-based educational inequalities, including neighbourhood factors, to inform educational and urban policy*.

Workshop participants identified what additional “missing matters” they believed needed addressing out of this session:

Regional & rural needs	Later life learning government policy	Honouring self
Volunteering	Use of big data	Coherent policy and strategies
Localising partnerships to street level	Economic potential per capita	Non-homogenous seniors’ segments

Where to from here?

Breakout facilitated group discussions explored the above question.

The reports out of these discussions sought to ensure there was a voice for seniors, how to engage meaningfully and to overcome barrier realities to achieve social inclusion. Partnerships and collaborations were noted as the process to share resources that build learning opportunities. Influencing policy to ensure lifelong learning is embedded and is relevant to the 'person on the street' helped revisit concept awareness and sharing. Placemaking was seen as important so that provision areas complemented where older Australians live and connect. Yet, overcoming disadvantage and isolation so that seniors continue to grow and learn to cope with our modern technology-based society was seen as an imperative.

Summing Up

Rapporteur Professor Chris Duke (PIMA) provided a synthesised overview and reflection on the workshop.

Duke identified recurring themes across different sessions, as well as the issues needing clarity, viz:

- Inclusion: for learning citizens and within communities, but we need to know 'where we are going'. There is subjectivity around age and where do we identify (perhaps) ten-year cohorts within what we refer to as: mature age, seniors, third and fourth age, pensioners, older adults, etc.
- Non-deliberate learning: so much of learning is non- or in-formal, so does the diversity of what learning is and what it is for diluted within the generic of lifelong learning?
- Place and space: perceptions about how these 'venues' are created, and the impact on people's identity requires acknowledgement and integration in thought and action.
- Intergenerational learning: as various kinds of government supports are contracting, how do we value add philosophical and personal strength in the "Big Society", or does it mean more volunteering?
- Tale of three learning cities: learning cities profiled were inspiring and indicated the evolving role of libraries that are playing a key role in developing learning cities/communities and offering support systems.
- Policy language: need to be clear on what is a learning community, race, proponents, participants etc. and distinguish from the silo approaches of the past.
- Working together: the central theme and of critical importance so the amalgam of common interests and cooperative initiatives are achieved.
- What is new: the Big Data project begs questions on what data is being used and by whom for what purposes.
- Avoiding the political: how can we meet the challenge and advocate in taking issues to government when in an environment where austerity is an excuse for removing support and services?
- Health and wealth: addressing these equity and related quality of life issues in the latter years is essential.

International Developments in Learning Cities

Reports from Professor Michael Osborne (in his role as Director – PASCAL International Observatory, Europe) and Peter Blunden (Melton, participant in the 2015 2nd UNESCO International Conference on Learning Cities, Mexico City)

Osborne provided a history of early projects through the PASCAL (Place and Social Capital and Learning Regions) International Observatory leading to the current future of learning cities initiatives influenced by its own Program of International Exchanges (online ideas exchanges between learning cities), Learning City Networks (LCN) themes, and the forthcoming Learning Cities 2040 International Conference advised in the introductory comments. In addition, practice is well informed through collaborative work with UNESCO on its International Platform on Learning Cities (IPLC), the advent of UNESCO's (2015) *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good*, as well as the attention to "promoting lifelong learning" as a matter for inclusive, quality education for all and making cities "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals to be implemented from January 2016. Integrating services through the PASCAL Learning Cities Networks is to support learning city start-ups in working with UNESCO, establish learning city studios to benchmark/appraise policy, and conduct learning city workshops.

Blunden described how Melton has adopted the strategic directions and courses of action in the UNESCO *Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities*: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002349/234932E.pdf>. While one can extrapolate, he believes more emphasis is needed in the areas of ageing, youth and culture. However, joining PASCAL's LCN and the UNESCO IPLC network will provide a wealth of knowledge and experience to build 'glocalisation'.

Appendix 1

Principal authors, Michael Cuthill (USQ) and Laurie Buys (QUT), in consultation with Bruce Wilson (RMIT), Helen Kimberley (Brotherhood of St Laurance), Denise Reghenzani (PASCAL), Peter Kearns (PASCAL), Sally Thompson (Adult Learning Australia), Barry Golding (Federation University), Jo Root (Council of the Ageing, Australia) and Rhonda Weston (University of the Third Age), have the following journal article in development:

Conceptualising ageing and learning in Australia: Towards an evidence base for informed and equitable policy.

The purpose of the paper is to “explore” lifelong learning for senior Australians and “propose a set of factors” that will impact on their later years. Existing segments of when to typify someone as “senior”, have been adapted to accept the following cohorts: “emerging seniors” (ages 45-60), “traditional retirees” (ages 61-80), and “elders” (ages 81+). The organisers of the *Seniors as Lifelong Learners: barriers, strategies, outcomes* workshop thought it useful to include the “Interrelated factors impacting on seniors’ learning” figure below to complement this report as a resource document.

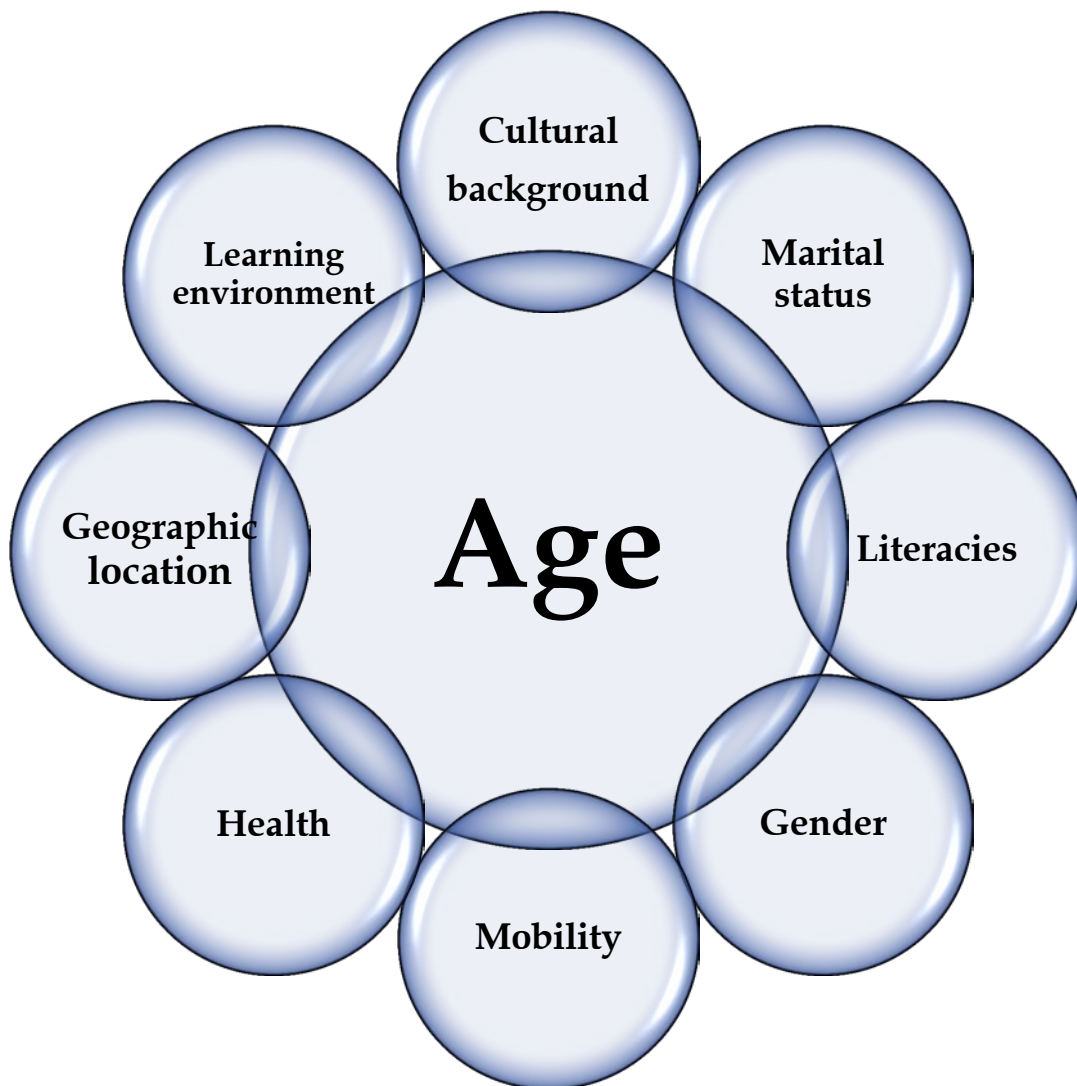


Figure 3: Interrelated factors impacting on seniors’ learning