

Older Learners: Challenging the Myths

ALEXANDRA WITHNALL

University of Warwick (United Kingdom)

Introduction

In spite of the fact that growing numbers of older people across Europe and beyond are enjoying longer and healthier lives than ever before, it is unfortunately the case that a whole range of myths and misunderstandings about the effects of ageing on older people's ability and willingness to learn still persist. There is actually a well-known saying in English to the effect that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks". Indeed, many older people themselves subscribe to the belief that they are 'too old' to learn and therefore miss out on opportunities to continue with a long-standing interest or to acquire new knowledge or to develop new skills in retirement. Yet all the evidence to date from a wide range of medical and educational sources suggests that learning in later life can have beneficial effects in terms of maintaining mental and psychological health and in helping older people to remain active and involved in their communities whatever their chronological age.

In the United Kingdom, there has been only a very gradual realisation of demographic trends and the far-reaching implications for educators of adults. Indeed, current government policy is very much focused on the educational needs of the 14-19 year old age group; a further target has been set to ensure that 50% of 18-30 year olds have access to university education, an initiative known as "Aimhigher". Of course, this is a very important aspiration but nevertheless, there is a considerable amount of work to be done in dispelling some of the myths about ageing that still abound and in convincing policy makers,

practitioners and older people themselves that there is much to be gained in increasing opportunities for older people to learn.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)¹, an organisation that works to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults, has a particular concern with older learners and currently supports a major project ('Older and Bolder') to develop better opportunities for them. As I have a long-standing research interest in later life learning, I was recently commissioned, together with two NIACE colleagues, to produce a handbook for practitioners that would critically examine some of the prevailing myths about ageing and older people's ability to learn (Withnall, McGivney & Soulsby 2004). As a contribution to debate, I would like to consider five particular myths of the many that we uncovered and then try to refute them by examining the evidence that relates to them. However, I will begin by considering who we mean when we talk about "older people" and set the context with some facts and figures about older people in the United Kingdom today.

How old is 'old'?

In the UK, entry into the state retirement scheme is often considered to be a marker for becoming an 'older person'. The age at which the state pension is available is currently 60 for women and 65 for men but this is due to be equalised for both sexes at 65 in the year 2020. However, changes in timing of exit from the labour market and the transformation of the institution of retirement makes this definition less reliable than previously. Some UK government departments are only interested in statistics relating to people aged 50-74 which means that those aged 75 or more are excluded. On the other hand, people in residential care may be over 75 and geriatric medicine is also mainly concerned with people in this age range. Then again, discussion of 'older workers' often refers to employees who may only be 45 years old. 'Older' people involved in voluntary work and as helpers of others might also be any age from 45 to 100. NIACE itself uses age 50 as the baseline for discussion of older people's educational needs. In my own research, I tend to talk about people who are 'post-work' (in the sense that they are no longer employed full-time and/or have relinquished major responsibilities for raising a family) rather than categorising them by chronological age.

¹ www.niace.org

Older people in the United Kingdom

Acknowledging these difficulties of definition, the statistical information that follows has been taken from a range of UK government data sources that have been collated by Age Concern, a national charity that works on behalf of older people.²

In 2003, the population of the UK, based on mid-year estimates, was 59,554,000. Of this figure, 18.5% were over pensionable age (women were in the majority) with 1,104,000 actually aged over the age of 85. Indeed, the 2001 Census of the Population showed that people over 60 years of age now outnumber those aged under 16. In 2002, a man of 60 could expect to live until 80 and a woman of the same age until 83.3 years and in mid-2001, 8100 people were estimated to be aged 100 or more.

Within these statistics, it is also worth considering the numbers of older people within the ethnic minority population. The table below shows the current proportions of people over 65 years old in some of the major groups

Table 1: The ethnic minority population over 65 years old in the UK

9% of Black Caribbean people
2% of Black African people
6% of Indian people
4% of Pakistani people
3% of Bangladeshi people
5% of Chinese people

The rather higher number of Black Caribbean people at present can be explained by labour market factors. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, London Transport actively recruited staff in the Caribbean islands to work as drivers and guards on the London Underground and later, many women came to train as nurses within the National Health Service. At present, the proportions of older people in the other groups is comparatively low but will expand in future years as the young population grows older with specific religious and cultural needs. There is also the issue of language as some members of these groups do not speak English. Finally, in common with many other European countries, the UK is currently trying to find ways of addressing the needs of a range of refugees and

² See www.ageconcern.org.uk

asylum seekers, many of whom have been traumatised by their experiences of persecution in their own countries. It is too early to say how well they will be assimilated into society and what their varied needs will be as they grow older far from their original homeland but it is a major issue that needs to be considered now.

What we can predict with some certainty is that the numbers of people over pension age overall will continue to grow as shown below.

Table 2: An ageing population in the future

Predicted numbers of people over pension age
11.3 million by 2006
13.2 million by 2026
15 million around 2040

Living in later life

If we look at the lives older people lead in the UK today, the picture is not very rosy. Using the same statistical information as above based on figures available for the year 2001-2 it is apparent that 70% of pensioner households depend on state benefits for at least 50% of income. They also spend higher proportions of their money on housing, food and fuel (28% of expenditure) than do other households whilst the poorest older people are those living alone and mainly dependent on their state pension. Often these are women who have not had the opportunity to build up a National Insurance record because it was not the norm for women to work outside the house when they were young or they have spent time out of the labour market whilst raising a family.

At the same time, however, it is apparent that there is a slowly emerging divide between these older people and some of those now in early retirement (plus those 'baby-boomers' approaching retirement) who will benefit from occupational pensions and perhaps from inheritance, particularly of property. The comparative success of a commercial company, 'Saga', that has developed a range of exotic holidays and other services aimed at people over 50 in the UK during the last few years illustrates well the existence of a fairly small but affluent number of older people and their numbers are doubtless set to grow in future years.

Leisure activities in later life

How do older people spend their time in retirement? The Age Concern statistics show that, in 2002, of those interviewed for the General Household Survey (these figures include Scotland in addition to England and Wales), 99% of those aged 60-69 and a similar percentage of those aged 70 and over had watched television during the previous month. The next most popular home-based activity was listening to the radio (82% and 76%). In some research I recently conducted myself,³ interviews with 35 older people confirmed these findings but visiting or entertaining relatives and friends also featured prominently. Outside the home, walking has been found to be the most popular physical activity for older people and my own research also confirmed this finding.

What then, is the place of learning in older people's lives? Although there are some difficulties in assessing older people's participation in formally organised learning because of the different ways in which organisations compile statistical information, NIACE (2004) estimated the following percentage rates of older people undertaking learning in England and Wales.

Table 3: % of age groups currently or recently participating in learning

Age group	Percentage
55-64	30%
65-74	14%
75+	10%

These figures include those in the lower age group who may still be in the workforce and therefore may be undertaking some kind of work-based training. However, the figures do not give any indication of how many older people overall might be intending to join a class or course at a later date or, more importantly, are choosing to learn informally. Again, in my own research, I found that many of those who completed questionnaires about their educational experiences or took part in interviews were actually engaged in learning on their own or with

³ See www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/gop/index.htm

friends having been motivated by a television programme or a particular book or magazine article. This is an aspect of later life learning that is frequently ignored but it certainly does not mean that older people should be denied access to the range of formal learning opportunities that are available to younger generations.

Access to learning opportunities

Let us explore this point further. Why should older people have access to learning opportunities at all? Firstly, it can be argued that a government that subscribes to a policy of lifelong learning has a duty to provide educational opportunities for *all* sectors of the community not just the young. Indeed, it is frequently pointed out that older citizens have a particular entitlement since they have paid taxes all their lives and yet have not had the opportunity to benefit from the educational opportunities available to successive generations. In 2006, the UK will implement the European Employment Directive that will outlaw age discrimination in employment, recruitment, education and training. This will obviously affect older people who are still in employment as regards opportunities for training but it is not clear to what extent it will impact on people over retirement age⁴

Secondly, at an international level, the mantra of 'active aging' that presumably incorporates learning activities can be seen in a range of policy documents emanating, for example, from the World Health Organisation (WHO 2002). In various recent policy documents, the UK government has also acknowledged assorted research evidence that has consistently demonstrated the link between later life learning and good mental and physical health. For example, the National Service Framework for Older People sets out to raise standards relating to their health care and actually includes the aim of improving quality of life through health-promotion work that includes encouraging older people to take part in both leisure pursuits and lifelong learning (Department of Health 2001).

Thirdly, a more recent development has been the move towards family and intergenerational learning. Family learning, endorsed by several government-funded projects, takes as its basic premise the idea that it is the family that

⁴ Previously, students over the age of 55 years who wanted to enter higher education were not eligible for financial support in the form of student loans. The government has now promised to remove this restriction.

provides the foundation and context for learning. Although largely aimed at improving basic skills, especially those of children and young people, there is a place for grandparents to be involved alongside other generations in special family learning activities. Intergenerational learning, whereby older and younger generations learn from each other, is also growing in popularity in the UK as in other countries around the globe. A particular example is a current trans-national project ('Teddy Bear') funded under EU Grundtvig Programme in which a UK local education authority is a partner. The project aims to develop intergenerational activities in rural areas in a range of different countries where older people may be isolated and lack access to a range of facilities but have skills and knowledge to exchange with children in local primary schools for their mutual benefit.

Barriers to learning in later life

In a large number of studies carried out in a range of different countries researchers have attempted to explore the various barriers and deterrents that militate against the participation of older people in educational activities (Withnall & Percy 1994). These are often shown to include institutional barriers such as high costs for courses and classes or failure to provide activities that would appeal to older learners. Situational factors such as caring duties or lack of transport, especially in rural areas, have also been examined. Although a review of these studies showed that many of the investigations into aspects of adults' participation and non-participation in education in general and that by older people in particular are doing no more than recounting people's *post-hoc* rationalisations (Withnall & Percy 1994), it seems likely that it is the attitudes of society towards ageing coupled with myths about older people's abilities and interests in learning that constitute the most formidable barrier. It is unfortunately the case that many older people themselves (but of course, not all) subscribe to these beliefs perhaps based on particularly unhappy experiences of learning at an earlier stage in life.

The myths

Having set the scene, let us now return to an examination of five particular myths concerning older people as learners and investigate how far they can be supported by existing evidence. In this, I will draw on my work for NIACE, previously mentioned, in which a range of cognitive, physical, dispositional and attitudinal factors were considered (Withnall *et al.* 2004).

Myth 1: "Older people have nothing of value to say"

This myth is doubtless the result of ageism – stereotypical beliefs about, and attitudes to people based on their chronological age or physical appearance. Ageism often results in older people being seen in a negative light as having no useful views to contribute and represents a cruel denial of their life experience. Sometimes they may be portrayed as helpless and in need of protection because they cannot think for themselves or are seen as incapable of taking any decisions over matters that affect their lives. These views tend to be reinforced in a society where, in spite of the growth in their numbers, older people are assigned a comparatively low status and their views rarely sought.

What can be said is that everyone ages differently and indeed, as people grow older, they tend to become more different rather than more alike. There is now a whole range of evidence that suggests that when older people are enabled and encouraged to express their experiences and views, especially on matters that affect them directly, and to recognise that they will be listened to, their confidence in their abilities improves and they are often motivated to undertake new activities that they might not have previously considered. Indeed, it can be shown that participation in their local communities and in the wider society can not only help to improve older people's sense of well-being and their overall psychological health but can also help them develop belief in their ability to make a difference to the lives of others. A major development in this respect in the UK is the Better Government for Older People initiative in which a range of older people in different localities are invited to offer their views as to how public services might be improved to incorporate their particular needs.⁵

It has been suggested that older people actually have a definitive role to play in society as builders of bridges to the future because they have the experience and flexibility to embrace change and to help us to move forward towards a new global society. If they can be encouraged to move away from old perceptions and ways of thinking, they might cease to be seen just as guardians of traditional values and could adopt new roles as mentors and teachers who can engage with other generations in order to explore new ways of thinking and indeed, of living (Schachter-Shalomi & Miller 1995; Laslett 1989).

⁵ See www.bgop.org.uk

Myth 2: "Older people forget things and are too slow to learn anything new"

Fear of memory loss and its possible implications is very common from mid-life onwards as many people find themselves occasionally unable to recall names or words or notice that they constantly mislay objects. Unfortunately, this tends to translate into the misperception that, as people grow older, their memories fail and they slow down to the extent that they are unable to learn new skills or make use of any new knowledge.

Memory refers to the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information and is usually studied in terms of its components. According to Whitbourne (2001) who has reviewed the evidence, there are at least 11 components of memory and not all of these decline with age so that there can be no justification for assuming that all older people are forgetful and unable to learn unless there is impairment of other complex cognitive processes. It is true that ageing has some significant effects on short-term and some aspects of long-term memory but it has been shown that individuals can be taught various strategies at any age such as forming associations to new material, the use of mnemonics, making lists etc. to help maintain different aspects of memory (Hancock 2000). It is often very effective to encourage older people to devise their own strategies to strengthen their memories and to help them develop more positive attitudes towards their ability to remember (Cusack & Thompson 2003).

Closely related to beliefs about memory loss is the perception that as people age, they slow down in some way and this prevents them from becoming effective learners. It is not clear, according to a discussion of experimental evidence (Whitbourne 2001) whether a person's reaction time is something general that affects performance in all daily activities, including learning, or whether it varies according to specific domains, tasks or processes. Some research also emphasises the importance of taking overall health status into account when considering an older person's speed of reaction as there are known to be some conditions such as chronic bronchitis that affect the efficiency of the central nervous system. Diabetes may also affect overall cognitive efficiency. In addition, some psychologists believe that reactions to chronic illnesses such as feelings of stress, anxiety and depression may have a negative effect on reaction times (Whitbourne 2001).

It may also be the case that any signs of slowness in learning may be related to what is being learned and the ways in which it is taught. Some older learners

may experience problems in pacing themselves and in organising their work. This seems to be the case particularly if they are studying complex and unfamiliar academic material that requires a high degree of self-direction in learning (Open University Older Students Research Group 1984).

It is nevertheless important to remember that we live in a society that tends to place a strong emphasis on speed of reaction in a whole range of situations. Speed is of course important when driving or sitting timed examinations. However, it may be that undertaking tasks in a slower and more deliberate manner can also have its own advantages in that this offers the chance to reflect on experiences and explore new possibilities in more depth.

Myth 3: "Older people have mobility problems, poor eyesight and they are all deaf"

As we know that people age differently, this is of course a wild generalisation. However, it is worth briefly examining each of these beliefs to show that physical factors do not necessarily have to affect older people's ability to learn.

Most older people are sufficiently mobile to be able to lead active, independent lives in the absence of chronic and painful diseases such as osteoarthritis. Indeed, getting out and about to undertake a whole range of activities is an important aspect of many older people's daily lives. However, it is widely accepted that the structures that support movement - bones, joints and muscles - do undergo age-related changes that gradually affect their functioning. There is a progressive decrease in muscle strength over a long period of time and it is also well known that bones lose their mineral content throughout adulthood, especially in women. Joints also undergo processes of deterioration in every component although these changes are not usually noticed until middle age.

This may seem a gloomy prognosis but it is now acknowledged that exercise, especially that involving strength training, can help to delay loss of muscle mass. Similarly, attention to exercise, diet and increased calcium intake can slow bone loss especially if weight-bearing exercise is encouraged from childhood onwards. Although exercise alone cannot compensate for age-related changes in the joints, older people can generally benefit from flexibility training that helps to retain mobility even in people whose joints have already suffered some damage. The main problem appears to be the issue of persuading older people and others in society that exercise and fitness related activity are not only for the young (Whitbourne 2001).

In the same way, it is the case that everyone experiences some degree of decline in their visual acuity as they grow older so that an 85 year old person will generally have a level of acuity that is 80% less than a person in their forties. By their fifties, most people need to wear glasses for reading and close work. Others may sometimes experience problems of vision such as cataracts, age-related macular degeneration or glaucoma but these are by no means universal and although some conditions cannot be completely cured, regular eye tests should be able to detect conditions in time for them to be controlled (RNIB, RCOphth & IGA 1996; RNIB & RCOphth 1995). Even those who are registered blind or partially sighted usually have some degree of sight and can certainly enjoy a range of learning and other activities provided any special requirements are taken into account.

It is certainly not the case that all older people are deaf but there are some hearing problems associated with ageing that are so common as to be considered normal. These include presbycusis, a loss of ability to hear high-pitched tones; and conductive hearing loss when damage occurs in one of the structures that transmit sounds within the ear (Whitbourne 2001). There are also other health conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes and the use of certain medication that can contribute to hearing loss in later life. Perhaps the main danger, however, is that the older person may not be fully aware that they have a hearing problem or may feel embarrassed because they cannot follow conversations. The solution may lie in more frequent checks on hearing as people age and the growing availability of new digital hearing aids that are more compact, easier to adjust and more discreet to wear.

Myth 4: "Older people live in the past and don't like change"

In recent years, we have witnessed changes in society on an unprecedented scale and it is therefore hardly surprising that older people may want to recall times when life was felt to be more stable. Indeed, many older people enjoy sharing their reminiscences about the past with each other perhaps as a way of cementing relationships with others from the same generation. However, reminiscence can alienate young people who cannot share the memories or are not interested and this may account for the widespread perception that older people prefer to live in the past.

What can be said is that reminiscing about past times does not mean that older people are not interested in the present. The ability to read, write and carry on a conversation is maintained throughout later life in the absence of severe

cognitive impairments and I found in my own research that many of the older people interviewed were avid consumers of newspapers, magazines, radio and television news and current affairs programmes and enjoyed debating political topics of the day with family members and friends. This was particularly the case with those who were less able to get out of the house.

Those who are more active often use their retirement years to keep themselves busy and in touch with others through volunteering. This has been highlighted in the UK through the development of the Experience Corps, a government backed movement that aims to maximise opportunities for voluntary activity among those aged over 50. There are other examples of older people using their skills and knowledge to help other older people through befriending schemes or to teach particular skills to younger disadvantaged people and to children. Older people also often give their services in a range of capacities as members of boards, trusts, as school governors, prison visitors or in charity work where their experience is valued and can be utilised in positive ways. There are also some recent indications that, as their numbers grow, they may become a more effective political force through involvement in pensioners' movements, party politics and local and general elections (Vincent 1999).

Allied to the belief that older people live in the past is the notion that they dislike going out, do not travel and are not interested in other people and cultures. Yet whilst they still maintain good health, it is clear that older people do enjoy travel and appear to benefit from the opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures in the same way as younger people. Many use travel in retirement to pursue interests for which they have previously lacked time and frequently show a spirit of adventure in choosing destinations. If they cannot afford long-haul travel, there are new opportunities for exchanges between older people's groups in different European countries where participants share their homes and learn about the language, history and customs of each other's countries. This arrangement has the advantage of being far less expensive than a traditional holiday. An International Association for the Cultural Exchange of Seniors has been set up to ensure that more older people can benefit from these opportunities (EURAG 2001).

In the UK, as in other European countries, there are various concessionary arrangements for train and bus travel for those over retirement age and although exact older visitor numbers are not available, it does appear that older people enjoy visiting historic sites, castles and exhibitions sometimes accompanied by

grandchildren or other family members. This suggests that far from living in the past, older people can actually be a tremendous resource for helping younger generations to connect with their own history as well as reflecting on the changes they have experienced in their own lives.

Myth 5: "Older people are not interested in learning"

It has been seen that older people do not participate in formally organised learning activity to the same extent as younger people. Some of the barriers and deterrents that discourage this have already been discussed. However, the absence of older people from courses and classes does not mean that they are not interested in learning. As has been seen, many older people enjoy learning informally through radio, television or other means. According to Dench & Regan (2000), older people, like those who are younger, may actually move in and out of learning activities according to their needs, preferences and individual situations and I was able to confirm this finding in my own research.

It is very apparent that, however they choose to learn, many older people are very aware of the importance of 'keeping the brain active' and enjoy the challenge of learning. Of the people interviewed in my research, there was a strong awareness of health messages about the importance of remaining both physically active and mentally alert in later life and opportunities for learning, even if very informally through a hobby, were seen as an important aspect of daily life.

It also appears to be the case that various triggers such as grandchildren entering school or university sometimes motivate older people to explore new interests. Indeed, in the UK, more people enrol for information technology courses than any other age group. Similarly, the changes in financial circumstances that retirement usually brings may encourage older people to learn more about aspects of house maintenance in order to save on costs. It is also well documented that bereavement or a move to a new area and the need to rebuild a life can sometimes be a motivational factor in encouraging participation (Withnall *et al.* 2004). What may have been a negative life experience can then often have positive outcomes in that the older person may build up the self-confidence and enthusiasm to take up a new interest while simultaneously making new friends. Indeed, older people generally have more time available to concentrate on developing their own interests. However, in my own research, some of the older couples interviewed described how their domestic roles and responsibilities tended to change once they were both retired and they often

engaged in quite complex negotiations with their spouses to allow them specific time to attend a course or to develop their own learning interests.

Implications for practice

Having investigated some of the myths that abound about the processes of ageing and older people's attitudes to learning, it is worthwhile considering the implications for practice. What general lessons can be learned by those who are involved with older learners whether as course organisers or as teachers and facilitators across a range of settings?

Firstly, we should guard against making judgements about older people as being economically non-productive, unable to learn and therefore unworthy of consideration when educational opportunities for adults are being offered. Neither should we make unwarranted assumptions about their interests and abilities. Many older people use retirement to continue a previous interest but equally, they may be motivated to learn something completely new or to develop new skills, especially if their life circumstances have changed in some way. It is important that older people's continuing ability to learn is acknowledged and respected.

Secondly, older people should be consulted about their learning needs and preferences. We should not presume to know what kinds of learning activity appeal to them without reference to their particular circumstances in a given locality or region. Devising ways of consulting older people themselves should be a first step in setting up new provision.

Thirdly, we should not assume that all older people automatically become physically and cognitively impaired as they age. However, there is now legislation in place in the UK to ensure that students with disabilities are not treated less favourably for reasons related to their disability and that reasonable adjustments are in place to help them. Indeed, there are some quite simple ways in which an educational venue can be made more welcoming for older learners. For example, educational institutions should take care to label entrances, exits and other essential facilities using special colour coding. Consideration might also be given to ensuring that classrooms are situated on the ground floor (or near to a lift) and that a range of different types of seating is provided with an appropriate arrangement of furniture so that learners can see each other and the tutor. The colour schemes chosen should be appropriate for people who may have difficulty in distinguishing certain colours (often those at the blue end of the spectrum) and there should be adequate lighting with an absence of glare.

Attention might also be paid to the placing, volume and sound quality of any audio-visual aids and to ensuring that there is a quiet but supportive atmosphere. Regular breaks and opportunities to move around should be built into any activity.

In the same way, teaching and learning materials can be adapted for use by older learners if necessary. Apart from taking particular care with the placing and quality of visual aids and with print size on written material, it is worthwhile for a tutor to give consideration at the outset to the nature of the learning task and the level of complexity involved.

Fourthly, and related to the last point, tutors may want to give special consideration to the pace of learning by helping older students to improve their concentration and encouraging them to devise personal learning strategies especially if they have been away from learning for any length of time. It has been seen that memory skills can be improved at any age and techniques for this can be incorporated into learning programmes. Tutors can also vary the speed at which information is given to students and allow time for new knowledge to be absorbed; it may also be appropriate to check back regularly to ensure that learners have understood rather than to set tests or exams.

Fifthly, teaching older people is not a one-way affair. Older students bring a wealth of experience and a whole range of interests developed over a lifetime to the learning situation and should be seen as partners in any educational endeavour. Teaching and learning techniques should be such that they are encouraged and enabled to express and exchange views, to develop critical thinking skills and to use their creative abilities. However, there is no reason why older people should not also be encouraged to try out new and possibly unfamiliar ways of learning – for example, using the internet for research purposes or producing weblogs – rather than relying on previously acquired learning styles which may no longer be wholly appropriate.

Conclusion

The number of older people in our communities across Europe (and elsewhere) is growing rapidly. It is likely that as life expectancy increases, there will be more opportunities for educationalists to consider what kind of opportunities older people might want and how these can best be provided bearing in mind the growing diversity of the older population. I have tried to show that a major challenge will be to address some of the myths that still exist about ageing but also to demonstrate that we have a realistic understanding of

age-related changes in functioning and are able to accommodate older learners by responding sensitively to their needs.

A final point - perhaps the one sin of which we are all guilty is of talking about older people as though they were an alien species! It is easy to forget that no one is immune from ageing and that when we talk about opportunities for older people, we are also talking about our own futures. In challenging some the prevailing myths about ageing, we are asking the all-important question - what sort of old age do we want for ourselves?

Let us begin to provide the answers now!

REFERENCES

- CUSACK, S.; THOMPSON, W. (2003). *Mental fitness for life*. Toronto, Key Porter Books Limited.
- DENCH, S.; REGAN, J. (2000). *Learning in later life: motivation and impact*. London, Department for Education and Employment.
- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH. (2001). *National service framework for older people*. London, Department of Health.
- EURAG. (2001). Access of older persons to education. *EURAG Newsletter*. 103-104.
- HANCOCK, J. (2000). *Maximise your memory*. Newton Abbot, David & Charles.
- LASLETT, P. (1989). *A fresh map of life*. London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- NIACE. (2004). *Business as usual...? The NIACE survey on participation in learning 2004*. Leicester, NIACE. Table 7 (Participation in learning 2004, by age).
- Open University Older Students Research Group. (1984). *Older students in the Open University*. Milton Keynes, Regional Academic Services, The Open University.
- RNIB and RCOphth. (1995). *Age-related macular degeneration*. London, RNIB.
- RNIB, RCOphth and IGA. (1996). *Understanding glaucoma*. London, RNIB.
- SCHACHTER-SHALOMI, Z; MILLER, R.S. (1995). *From age-ing to sage-ing. A profound new vision of growing older*. New York, Warner Books, Inc.
- VINCENT, J.A. (1999). *Politics, power and old age*. Buckingham, Open University Press.
- WHITBOURNE, S.K. (2001). *Adult development and aging. Biopsychosocial perspectives*. New York, John Wiley and Sons.
- WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION. (2002). *Active ageing. A policy framework*. Geneva, WHO.s
- WITHNALL, A; MCGIVNEY, V; SOULSBY, J. (2004). *Older people learning. Myths and realities*. Leicester, NIACE.
- WITHNALL, A; PERCY, K. (1994). *Good practice in the education and training of older adults*. Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Ltd.