

“University Stakeholders, Intergenerational Relationships and Lifelong Learning: a European Case Study”¹

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ABSTRACT

This study describes and analyses the role of a Senior Programme of the University of Lleida (Catalonia, Spain) aimed at fostering older people’s lifelong learning, active ageing, social participation and intergenerational relationships. Based on qualitative Action Research and Participant Observation, this article examines the participation of senior students as stakeholders in this Programme and in two European projects, SIFORAGE and TOY, developed between 2012 and 2017. The findings reveal the importance of these learning and research activities to promote intergenerational solidarity, the quality of life of older people, and the development and improvement of the Senior Programme itself.

Keywords: “Profigurative socialisation”, Lifelong Learning, Quality of Life, Stakeholder, Intergenerational Relationships.

Introduction

The extension of the human lifespan in modern societies has created new challenges in various fields, including education and social relationships. Although older people tend to live longer now, many of them are isolated from their families and their grandchildren due to factors as diverse as increasing urbanisation, migration, family

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disintegration, and the spreading out of extended family networks across different cultures and continents. Additionally, a general descent in the birth rate means that children are now growing up in smaller families, and have fewer opportunities to make contact with people from different age groups, including their grandparents. Within this context, and following one of the most emblematic initiatives of the 2020 European Strategy to improve the quality of life of older people and their social participation, there is an urgent need to adopt new strategies and create new opportunities whereby intergenerational dialogue, social cohesion and active participation of older people can be fostered (García Lizana, 2013; Agmon, Doron & Ergon-Karlin, 2018).

This study describes and analyses the role of the Senior Programme² of the University of Lleida (henceforth referred to as UdL) in Catalonia (Spain), a degree aimed at improving older people's lifelong learning, active ageing, social participation and intergenerational relationships within the context of higher education. Based on qualitative Action Research and Participant Observation, this article examines the Senior students' participation as stakeholders of this Programme (2012-2017), as well as of two other European projects related to it between 2012 and 2017, "Social Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing for Sustainable Economic Growth" (SIforAGE), and "Together Old and Young" (TOY). The two main objectives of the study are:

1. To review the concepts of stakeholder and active ageing with a special emphasis on the development of intergenerational relationships.

² The administrations that collaborated in the Senior Programme were the Social Council of the UdL and the Institute of Education of the City Council of Lleida. Since 2004, the UdL has been a member of the Spanish National Association of University Programmes for Older Adults (AEPUM). In total, fifty-three Spanish universities have implemented this type of programme since then.

2. To present an innovative vision of lifelong learning for senior students based on their participation as stakeholders in two research projects.

The methodological framework of this study is based on Action Research. Action Research is an applied form of field research that involves socio-educational processes and enables the analysis of the participants' feelings, emotions and subjective perceptions. Therefore, it represents a discursive representation of reality rather than a statistical one. The Action Research method enables a more holistic approach to daily group situations, such as participants' everyday experiences, and, in the case of the present study, it has been used to observe and assess the degree of involvement of a group of students in the Senior Programme. Kurt Lewin is considered as the main forerunner of the concept and practice of this method, which implies the researcher's commitment to clarifying and defining problems, providing a basis for rigorous and systematic work, and improving practice (Ander-Egg, 2003; Stenhouse, 1984; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992; Santos, 1993). While the ethnomethodological perspective helps to highlight day-to-day activity as an extraordinary event (Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1971; Guerrero, 1991), Action Research is facilitated through Participant Observation. Within Action Research as a global framework for *in-situ* research, Participant Observation is one of the key methods to analyse a specific social reality. It offers a series of plausible possibilities for research that imply the adoption of an interpretive perspective within the socio-educational field. As its name indicates, Participant Observation implies direct participation of the researcher, who becomes an active member of the focus group and, thus, can carry out this analysis in a more integrated way and from an insider's perspective. Participant Observation can take different forms. One of them is face-to-face interviews, which not only help gain a better understanding of our social reality, but also promote change and innovative actions, such as

“communicative observation”.³ In this way, this technique becomes inter-subjective, as it involves the co-operative interpretation of both researcher and the subject(s) interviewed.

Closely connected to this notion of co-operative learning and research, this article also highlights the importance of the interaction between research and teaching actions, and particularly of those that are based on “prefigurative” and, especially, “postfigurative” cultures. According to Margaret Mead (1970), “prefigurative” refers to the process of learning from children and “postfigurative” to the process of learning from older people. In line with Mead’s perception of those two cultures of learning as essential for intergenerational relationships and for the creation of a closer bonding between different cohorts in a collaborative and dialogued way, this study enhances the need to promote projects in which senior students offer opportunities of “profigurative” socialisation, in which older people can also benefit from their interaction with the young (Molina-Luque, 2017). Borrowing from the acronym of one of the two projects described, this article ultimately advocates for a “toyfigurative” culture, in which both old and young participate as agents and co-creators of knowledge.

Active Ageing, Intergenerational Relationships, and Lifelong Learning

The World Health Organisation defines “active ageing” as the process in which opportunities for health, participation and security are optimised in order to improve older people’s quality of life.⁴ Active ageing, therefore, allows older adults to realise their potential for physical and social welfare, and promotes a positive public image of

³ “Communicative observation” is a critical communicative methodology that makes sure that researchers co-operate with the participants on equal terms, and can make comments and share their interpretations. It places a particular emphasis on the advantages of observation as a form of participation. For more information, see: CREA – Centre for Social and Educational Research. University of Barcelona. <http://www.neskes.net/workalo/indexan.htm>

⁴ See: <http://www.who.int/ageing/healthy-ageing/en/>

the process of growing older by ensuring the quality of life in the later years. This implies giving senior citizens the possibility to fully participate in society, to improve their opportunities for employment, to allow them to make an active contribution through voluntary work and intergenerational programmes, and to foster independent lives by adapting housing, infrastructure, technology and transport to meet their needs.⁵

Intergenerational relationships and lifelong learning also play a fundamental role in the practice of active ageing as they open up opportunities to improve the quality of life of senior students through their participation in their local communities. Intergenerational relationships do not only refer to the organisation of activities for senior citizens and young people, but also to specific programmes that are designed to foster intergenerational dialogue. As Agmon, Doron and Ergon-Karlin (2018) argue, intergenerational courses, as part of the graduate academic program, not only provide alternative interaction between students and older persons, but also foster meaningful intergenerational learning, activism, and social participation within a broader context of university–community partnership. In order to ensure the good functioning and continuation of these programmes, it is necessary to involve educators trained in intergenerational issues and to make sure that senior students become active participants in their local communities.

Lifelong learning plays a key role in the promotion of active ageing, which at the same time guarantees the participation of older people in society. In senior university programmes, older students become agents of both research and teaching methodologies. When they become stakeholders in research projects, the interaction between teaching and research is reinforced, which at the same time entails the

⁵ See: The European Year of Active Ageing 2012:
<http://www.envejecimientoactivo2012.net/Menu29.aspx>

improvement of student-centred teaching methods.⁶ The interconnection between teaching and research helps to better understand how knowledge is generated and transmitted. While research enriches teaching methods and study plans by adding critical dynamism based on new findings and the development of innovative perspectives, teaching, on the other hand, helps to avoid losing the global vision and the context of scientific research, which can sometimes become fragmented and distanced from social reality. The interaction between research and teaching within the Action Research framework allows senior students to improve their critical thinking as well as their ability to solve problems and engage in self-study. In fact, the European University Association (EUA, 2003) urges universities to work towards this type of interaction, and contends that it is paramount to guarantee the students' exposure to both research and training as part of their overall education.

In this particular study, the students are older people enrolled in the Senior Programme of the UdL (2012-2017), who act as stakeholders of the programme itself and of two research projects related to it. Their participation in these three programmes helps to promote the training capacity of the university, while at the same time consolidating the senior students' own position in society. This bidirectional flow also reinforces intergenerational solidarity and dialogue. In the context of this study, these are promoted by giving the possibility to undergraduates of Social Education and Social Work to enrol in courses of the Senior Programme and to sign up for cultural activities offered by the Open Classroom (Aula Oberta). Additionally, senior students can participate in two more different courses. One of them focuses on 'Social Action', which gives the programme its name, and is based on lifelong learning and training. Some of the 'actions' resulting from this programme are, for example, the development of a

⁶ It should not be forgotten that teaching itself is a source of learning for those who teach. For more information, see: Oliveras, J. et al. (2005), pp. 13 and pp. 21-23; and Molina, F. (2006).

reading project at the town's public library aimed at secondary-school students, the design and implementation of Catalan-language lessons, and collaboration with the town's Food Bank, all of which have been led by senior students. The other programme related to the Senior degree focuses on intergenerational relationships, and is offered as an official degree of the University of Lleida, entitled “Senior Degree in Culture, Science, Technology and Society”. Through this programme, senior students can get the Senior Diploma, which allows them to continue their studies and become 'Senior Specialists': through this title, they can develop and expand their knowledge in fields ranging from the history of music, the Middle Ages, chronic pathologies, or marital law, among others. It is also worth highlighting that the academic offer and work groups of the Senior programme increase each year, which shows the success and interest in these courses.

Senior Students as Stakeholders

The concept of a “stakeholder”, which originated in the business world in the early sixties,⁷ is of crucial importance for the conceptual framework of this study and the academic context through which it is revised. According to Freeman’s classical definition (1984), stakeholder refers to a group of people or an individual who can have an influence on the decisions and the achievement of objectives of an organisation (Lozano, 1999: 124). When this is applied to the academic world, research shows that stakeholders can help improve the relations between universities and their communities (Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2013). As noted by Bjorkquist (2008), the relevance of

⁷ The “stakeholder” concept was first originated in the business community in 1963 in an internal memorandum of the Stanford Research Institute. Since then, it has been used to modify the orientations and perspectives of companies and organisations (Wang, & Dewhirst, 1992). These conceptual changes have been developed in relation to the increasingly active roles assumed by stakeholders whose opinions and interventions have been taken into consideration in various companies and organisations (Lozano, 1999, p. 122-123).

universities in society and other non-educational institutions and organisations is increasing, and the same applies to stakeholders who help to foster the connection between academia and society in general. According to Mainardes, Alves and Raposo (2013), university teaching staff and researchers consider their students as stakeholders just as as doctors consider their patients, or engineers their end users in the same way.

Cavanagh and McGovern (1988) and Frederick et al. (1988) distinguish between “internal” and “external” stakeholders and, the latter, in addition, between "primary" and “secondary” stakeholders (Lozano, 1999, p. 126). According to these authors, the relationship between the university and society is a direct one, since it involves the need of the university to achieve its most important mission, which is to produce “goods and services” for society at large. In this case, the internal stakeholders are the Administrative and Service Personnel and Teaching Staff, as well as the students of the Senior Programme. The secondary group of stakeholder is the result of the impact of the university's mission on local communities, social movements, European projects, senior students and the general public. In this type of relationship, the "external" stakeholders are politicians, clients, and the local and international communities with which the university has some connection. With regard to the UdL, the secondary relationship involves European research projects, the members of the City Council of Lleida, the representatives of the local and international communities, and the students of the Senior Programme. In a nutshell, the concept of the university stakeholder has various meanings and it is subject to a specific context (Mainardes, Alves and Raposo, 2013). It is precisely thanks to the malleability of the concept that it can be applied to the students of the Senior Programme at the UdL as both recipients and active participants of the lifelong learning programme itself and two European projects.

The Senior Programme of the UdL, and the SiforAGE and TOY Projects

The Senior Programme of the UdL⁸ is aimed at people over 55 years who wish to extend and deepen their knowledge through higher education. The main objectives of the Senior Programme are:

- a) To promote the three basic pillars of university education amongst the adult population: education-learning, research and service to society.
- b) To encourage older people's social integration through higher education.
- c) To offer new opportunities to people from different professional backgrounds to extend their knowledge in other areas of learning.
- d) To foster personal development, creativity, tolerance and coexistence.
- e) To improve social, cultural, political and economic participation in order to stimulate human relations and cooperation.
- f) To provide scientific and cultural tools to better understand the present-day society, science and culture.
- g) To facilitate access to the use of ICT.
- h) To foster the sharing of experiences and knowledge within work groups to promote greater social interaction, education and research.

The four-year structure and assessment of the Senior Programme of the UdL complies with the general guidelines of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Senior students have the chance to carry out complementary activities recognised by 3 ECTS for each course, and can choose extra activities offered by the UdL and the City Council of Lleida. The last two years of the Senior Programme are especially relevant to Action Research and Participant Observation as they offer the possibility to enrol into research-related

⁸ See: <http://www.senior.udl.cat>

subjects and to collaborate with university research groups. The senior students can also complete their university training in fields of study that allows them to put into practice their previous knowledge, to improve their personal and social wellbeing, to facilitate interpersonal and intergenerational relations, and to promote peer learning and research. The senior students of this programme acquire specific competences that help them apply their previous knowledge to practice and develop critical thinking through group discussions and cultural and class activities. The development of these competences and their final outcomes align the programme with the ideal benefits of active ageing. This is clearly observed in the interviews conducted and the participatory-observation work done for this study.

The six senior students interviewed for this study, aged fifty-eight to sixty-two, have claimed that their new role as students of this programme not only kept them busy and fostered their cognitive skills, but also increased their social relationships and helped to find a balance between leisure and work in their everyday life. According to Joan, aged sixty-five, active mental activity is crucial for a good functioning of one's mind and body. Similarly, another senior student, Jesús, aged sixty, thinks that the Senior university courses can be seen as the extension of the active life he had before retirement. For Jesús, the retirement stage is the perfect time in life to develop one's hobbies and to expand one's knowledge in different fields through readings, class discussions, and the attendance to lectures. As he puts it: "studying in later life is like opening the door that had been shut for a long time. I have opened up the windows to let the fresh air in, and to bring in new furniture. I am finding new answers to the previously unresolved questions". María, another participant of the Senior Programme, aged sixty, has stated that her enrolment in the Senior courses has helped her to develop new study strategies and critical thinking skills that have allowed her to follow the

subjects more easily. She has also added that her sense of maturity, life experience and wisdom, which she feels she has acquired with age and which she continues to develop into her later years, have been crucial to continue learning, remembering, and finding solutions to problems. These comments support the idea of the benefits of the lifelong learning, which, as the participants have highlighted, helps to find a balance between their inner selves and the external world, and enable them to become more active citizens and, in general, improve their quality of life. Class discussions, group work, research, and cultural activities also add to a better comprehension of different intergenerational, cultural, and age-related aspects.

The positive effects of the Senior Programme on its participants were enhanced through their involvement in two European research projects connected with the degree, and developed between 2012 and 2017: SIForAGE and TOY. The SIForAGE project (Social Innovation on Active and Healthy Ageing for Sustainable Economic Growth) was a 7th Frame Programme for Scientific Research in Society financed by the European Commission. Its main objectives were to foster greater collaboration between institutions, researchers and civil society in order to promote active and healthy ageing, as well as to improve the welfare of senior citizens and recognise their roles as relevant socio-economic agents from multidisciplinary and multicultural perspectives. It also strove to generate synergies between different agents involved in this process, and provided the European Commission with the information, instruments and recommendations necessary to enact appropriate legislation for active ageing. The SIForAGE project had a consortium of twenty members, ranging from universities to companies that specialised in technological innovation and productive investment, to care homes and public institutions. This consortium, coordinated by the group GISME of the University of Barcelona, disseminated the work packages on new-technology

initiatives designed for older people, incorporated the perspective of active ageing in classrooms, and made technical recommendations for European politicians and policy-makers. It is important to highlight that its focus was not based on the consortium, but also on its stakeholders – that is, public and private institutions and work groups interested in participating in the process of dissemination and mutual learning related to active and healthy ageing.⁹ The members of the Senior Programme interviewed in this study were part of the SiforAGE stakeholder network.

TOY (Together Old and Young) was a project designed to promote intergenerational relations between children under the age of 8 and senior citizens over the age of 55. TOY aimed to examine how intergenerational interaction can benefit the two different generations involved and the community as a whole with a special focus on demographic, social and family structures. The development of this project was in line with the conclusions drawn by the Council for Adult Education (May 2008), which recognised the need for the EU member states to fight against social exclusion, low levels of education, unemployment and rural isolation, and to give greater attention to lifelong learning programmes for older workers and immigrants. The project also responded to the challenges established by the 2012 European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity, with an aim to improve opportunities for older people to remain part of the work force, to share their experiences with others, and to play an active role within society, which at the same time enabled them to maintain their mental and physical welfare.¹⁰ The TOY project was also focused on the development of active ageing and voluntary work for senior citizens, as well on the promotion of age-related

⁹ The project began in 2012 and concluded in 2016 with a final international conference in Barcelona, in which the main findings were presented to the European Commission, the governments of the EU member states, and the citizens. The presentation of this project was catalogued in the project's blog by Ander Errasti López, the Finance Manager of the SiforAGE Project, GISME Group, University of Barcelona. See: <http://envejecimientoenred.wordpress.com/2013/12/03/siforage-el-reto-del-envejecimiento-activo-y-saludable-en-la-union-europea/>

¹⁰ See: <http://www.toyproject.net/>

education from the early stages of life.¹¹ This project sought to improve children's social, linguistic, and communicative competences, provided support to their families, and promoted consciousness-raising on issues related to ageing and the cycle of life. Both senior students and children who participated in the project had the chance to improve their self-esteem, interacted with each other, and generated empathy, curiosity, and creativity, thereby fostering intergenerational dialogue. Through its various actions, TOY provided a better understanding and appreciation of different types of behaviour associated with different ages and the stages of life, reduced age-based discrimination, improved social solidarity, transmitted cultural traditions, and fostered social cohesion. In this project, the senior students combined both the "prefigurative" and "postfigurative" cultures that Mead defined in her study. The project findings reveal that, through the combination of these two cultures, the life experiences of older people (including the students of the Senior Programme) can help younger generations in their process of growth, while, on the other hand, children and young people can help older people in the acquisition of new skills, such as those related to the use of ICT.

Additionally, the interaction between younger and older people in this project and the Senior programme in general led to an identification of good practices that were very useful for teachers and students who came from different social, economic,

¹¹See: <http://educacio.paeria.cat/lleida-educa/als-ciutadans-i-ciutadanes/toy-together-old-young/toy-together-old-young> and <http://www.toyproject.net>

Under the coordination of the ICDI (International Child Development Initiatives), all the partners contributed to the development of the proposal. In this sense, the rest of the members of the team were: International Child Development Initiatives (the Netherlands), the Dublin Institute of Technology (Ireland), the Educational Research Institute (Slovenia), Lunaria (Italy), the Comenius Foundation for Child Development (Poland), the University of Lleida and *Ajuntament de Lleida* (Spain), the University of Aveiro (Portugal) and Retesalute (Italy). Dr Margaret Kenan is the Main Researcher, together with Dr Giulia Cortesi. The work undertaken by the UdL Senior Programme as a stakeholder resulted from the collaboration between the University of Lleida and the City Council: Mr Àngel Melero, Dr Montse Gea and Dr Anna Soldevila (UdL), Mr Joan Ballesté and Ms Blanca Moreno (*Ajuntament de Lleida*) were the members of both institutions involved.

educational and professional backgrounds.¹² For instance, some of the lecturers of the Senior Programme defined their teaching experience as having been highly satisfying, both from a professional and a personal point of view. Ramón Camats, for instance, highlighted that his teaching experience in this programme had been very rewarding, precisely because he had learned a lot along with his senior students. In a similar vein, Ana Soldevila stated that one of the greatest pleasures of teaching senior students was to observe the desire to learn and to discover new things they showed. To her, the end of the academic year was marked by a sense of gratitude that reminded her of the essence of education, namely, the reason why teachers become teachers. By the same token, Lluïsa Cabeza added that there was nothing more gratifying for a teacher than seeing how her own knowledge could be successfully transmitted and appreciated by her students. Another professor, Manuel Sánchez Torres, stated that his regular contact with the senior students had resulted in a bidirectional learning experience, which had been fulfilling for all.

Besides their participation as stakeholders in these two European projects, the students of the Senior programme also volunteered in different activities related to both the programme itself and the city of Lleida in general. For example, three senior students volunteered in the “Computer 1 Workshop,” a consolidation course for first-year students of the Senior programme. Others participated in city projects like “LECXIT,” organized by the Jaume Bofill Foundation; the Food Collection Point, planned by the Food Bank of the city of Lleida; or the “Gardening and Landscapes” project. Other volunteering actions involved artistic work. Thus, more than twenty senior students participated in the Theatre and Sardana Dancing workshops organized

¹² We would like to thank Dr Maria Vidal (Grup Dedal-Lit, UdL) and Mr Ángel Melero (Senior Programme, UdL) for their help in the identification and recording of good practices. See: <http://www.siforage.eu/>; <http://www.senior.udl.cat/>; <http://www.aepumayores.org/>.

by the City Council. The members of the Theatre Workshop staged two plays and participated in the 21st Local Festival of Performing Arts “Josep Fonollosa-Fono,” whereas The Sardana Dancing group was involved in many different events and organized the dancing of this typical Catalan folk dance for the city citizens. Some of the Senior students also expressed their willingness to collaborate with the Association of Volunteers of “La Caixa” Foundation in Lleida and were part of the project organized by the Network of Neighbourhood Associations of Lleida – FAVLL – Neighbours of the World (“Federació d’Associacions de Veïns de Lleida” – FAVLL – Veïns del Món), an action that many of them intended to continue beyond their participation in the Senior programme.

One of the female senior students of this programme, for example, reflected on the benefits of the social activities organised within the context of this degree, and on the positive impact that being a stakeholder in the programme and its projects had had on her quality of life. When asked about the effect of these activities on her creativity and social participation, she claimed that thanks to the Senior degree she had recovered hobbies she had had to postpone in previous stages of her life due to family and professional obligations. Significantly, she had discovered that older age can be a period of high creativity and intense energy that enables you to pursue your dreams in ways you had not been able to or dared to experiment before. As she reported, “Now is the time, and you take advantage of the moment to the fullest”. Additionally, the interviewed senior student said that the enrolment in the Senior Programme had made her a more active participant in society, and had also allowed her to feel younger, more self-confident, energetic, and excited about her newly discovered capacities, her learning process, and her life in general. As she claimed, “your sense of worth increases with age, and you have a lot more to offer to others ...”. Similarly, another female

student stated that her enrolment in the Senior Programme was a turning point in her life. She confessed that she would never forget the afternoon when she first went through the door of the University of Lleida as a student, a memory that becomes defined as a significant transition in her later life:

I knew that physical space, but this time I observed it as if it was new to me, as if it was mine somehow. And now I was here, walking happy in the hallways. [...] Being at the university was the pending subject of my life, a dream that was almost beginning to fade. That is why, when I heard of the Senior Programme, [...] I did not think twice about it; it was my great opportunity and I could not let it escape. [...] Now I feel fully satisfied. I want to remind the men and women of my generation that we still have a long way to go, to reconsider ourselves, and to take full advantage of our time.

As reflected by these participants and the actions of participation-observation undertaken in this study, encouraging the involvement of the Senior students as stakeholders of the programme and the related SiforAGE and TOY projects enhanced the quality of life of the participants involved by widening their range of experiences and forms of social participation, which also included intergenerational interaction. In the words of Jaume Marc, aged sixty-six, through his participation in these programmes and projects he could get to know —

... new places, new partners and colleagues. It has been a rewarding course. Nothing to do with the work done left behind. I am satisfied. [...] My enrolment in the University of Lleida has been an important step for the little boy that I still have in me, now that I have become a grandfather almost without realizing it. [...] I consider myself lucky to be able to live the university lifestyle and have a support of my family, which encourages me to keep up with this vital action that keeps me on track.

At the same time, the involvement in the degree as stakeholders helped Jaume Marc and his partners to reflect on their own learning processes, while at the same time offering the teachers of the Senior Programme the chance to meet dynamic and creative students who were willing to remain agents in society and in their own lives. In this respect, Jaume Marc said that being part of the Senior programme is like ‘opening a box of

chocolates'. According to him, attending classes has helped him to expand his vocabulary, to express himself better, to use his imagination, and to improve his concentration. Another participant of the Senior Programme, José Luís, has claimed that the Senior courses helped him to become more active, curious and reconsider his old age: "people like me, who are no longer sixty, have a future. I congratulate myself and I congratulate all those senior students, people and institutions, who have had the excellent idea of starting up this Senior University."¹³ The participants' comments reveal that the Senior Programme not only enhances the participants' social interaction, but also, by doing so, challenges the idea of old age as a period in life dominated by frailty, inactivity, and passiveness, as depicted by the so-called narrative of decline which still defines current understandings of ageing (Gullette, 2004). Contrary to this pervasive narrative, the various experiences of the senior students interviewed and observed in this study show that old age is not something to be feared, but rather a new stage of life in which new possibilities for growth that were not available in earlier life phases enable a deeper understanding of one's self and of late life in general.

Conclusions

This article has tried to show the importance of the contribution of senior students to intergenerational communication, the construction of knowledge, social inclusion, and active ageing through the case of the Senior Programme of the University of Lleida. Active participation through education should become an integral part of any programme that is aimed at attaining or enhancing social inclusion. This article has also highlighted the importance of the interaction between research and teaching by showing how active, reflective and critical stakeholders have an impact on learning processes.

¹³ See: http://www.senior.udl.cat/comentariisopinions/cisidelsestudiants.html?__locale=ca

Teaching based on research provides an opportunity to develop a research-orientated education programmes that focus on the student and facilitate the transmission of new information into society. The article also bears witness to the fact that intergenerational education should be approached in a complex and holistic way in terms of its content and meaning (Morin, 2000). Additionally, it has showed that it is crucial to undertake research actions in which educators combine their roles as researchers and teachers that are based on both prefigurative and “postfigurative-toyfigurative” (Molina-Luque, 2017, p. 155) cultures, a type of collaborative and not hierarchical socialisation that is based on supportive intergenerational dialogue. These aspects should become an important part of everyday socialisation and remain open to global processes at all levels, including family relationships, public administration, politics, economics, leisure, and education.

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