



# THEORIES ON INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING WITH SENIOR CITIZEN TEACHERS: BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP

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Intergenerational learning with senior citizen teachers is a multifaceted approach to education that bridges generational gaps. This process leverages the wealth of knowledge and experience that senior teachers bring to the profession, creating dynamic environment where different generations learn from each other and together. Several theoretical frameworks, including social capital theory, activity theory, lifelong learning theory, social learning theory, intergenerational transmission theory and cognitive load theory. These theories collectively highlight how intergenerational learning occurs through social networks, continuous personal development, observational learning, value transmission and cognitive processes. This approach not only facilitates the transfer of professional wisdom and cultural heritage but also inspires students to view learning as lifelong journey. It creates a symbiotic relationship where senior teachers find continued purpose in their profession, students receive valuable mentorship and the educational system benefits from diverse perspectives. Hence, intergenerational learning with senior citizen teachers serves as a powerful tool for preserving knowledge, promoting lifelong learning and fostering cross-generational understanding in education.

**Keywords:** *Intergenerational Learning, Theories on Intergenerational Learning, Senior Citizen Teachers, Lifelong Learning.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational learning arises from activities which purposely involve two or more generations with the aim of generating additional or different benefits to those arising from single generation activities. It generates learning outcomes, but these may or may not be the

primary focus of the activity. It involves different generations learning from each other and learning together with a tutor or facilitator (Thomas, 2009).

Senior citizen teachers though retired from active teaching continue to contribute significantly to the education profession through various

means such as volunteering, mentoring and serving on educational committees. These experienced educators bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the field playing a crucial role in promoting lifelong learning and development for both current teachers and students. Meanwhile the research on intergenerational learning within families has focused on how beliefs, practices and behaviors are transmitted from one generation to the next.

Studies have examined the ways families pass down traditions, values, parenting styles, health and wellness behaviors and financial literacy across generations. The process of intergenerational learning both in educational settings and within families serves as a vital mechanism for preserving cultural heritage fostering personal growth and ensuring the continuity of important societal practices and knowledge.

**Katherine et al (2014)** claims overview of research and practices related to intergenerational learning within families. It highlights the importance of family-based learning and the potential benefits of intergenerational learning for both children and older adults. The authors also discuss various factors that can influence intergenerational learning within families such as cultural values and social norms.

Intergenerational learning with senior citizen teachers is the process of knowledge sharing, skill transfer and experience exchange between older and younger generations of teachers and students. The type of learning can take place within various educational settings and can involve both formal and informal mentoring relationships. Research in this field has explored several key areas including the benefits of mentoring relationships between senior citizen teachers and their younger counterparts and strategies for retaining senior citizen teachers in the workforce and ways to integrate technology into teaching practices.

Nowadays, the intergenerational approach is not just the traditional approach but a one-way knowledge transfer from older people to the young. The rapid growth of novelties and new problems calls for the approach of cooperation between generations and cooperative learning (**Licen, 2010**).

## 2. THEORIES ON INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

There are several theories that explain the concept of intergenerational learning:

**2.1. Social Capital Theory:** James S. Coleman, Pierre Bourdieu and Robert D. Putnam are among the scholars who have contributed to social capital theory. This theory suggests that intergenerational learning occurs when people have access to social networks that provide them with opportunities to learn from one another. Senior citizen teachers can share their knowledge and experiences with younger generations and in turn younger generation can contribute their skills and perspectives to the older generation. Social capital theory examines how social relationships once formed can benefit individuals and organizations beyond their original context of creation (**Luoma-aho, V**).

According to this, theory create opportunities for senior citizen teachers to participate in social networks that allow them to share their knowledge and experiences with younger generations. This could involve setting up mentoring programs, organizing social events and creating online communities where senior citizen teachers can connect with younger generations. According to **Stanton Salazar and Dornbusch (1995)** educational researchers have examined both the various functions and forms of social capital within schools and its influence on student outcomes (i.e., achievement, attainment, and aspirations).

**2.2. Activity Theory:** Activity Theory, a perspective on learning and cognition developed by scholars such as Lev Vygotsky, Alexander Luria, and Alexei Leontiev has its roots in Socio-Cultural Theory. This approach focuses on activity systems as a means to simultaneously examine individual cognition and social context. Activity Theory considers multiple factors in the learning process including the learner's history, motivations, mediating artifacts (such as language and tools), community, situation and culture (**Davis & Francis, 2022**).

Within this theoretical framework, intergenerational learning is understood as occurring when individuals of different age groups engage in activities that promote mutual learning and skill development. For instance, senior citizen teachers might participate in mentoring programs

where they share their knowledge and experiences with younger generations. Conversely, younger individuals can benefit from these interactions by gaining insights and skills from their more experienced counterparts. This reciprocal exchange of knowledge and skills across generations exemplifies the practical application of Activity Theory in fostering learning through social interaction and cultural transmission.

According to this theory provide opportunities for senior citizen teachers to engage in learning activities that promote skill development and knowledge transfer. This could involve organizing workshops, training sessions and other learning opportunities that allow senior citizen teachers to share their knowledge and skills with younger individuals.

**2.3. Lifelong Learning Theory:** Malcolm Knowles and Cyril O. Houle are among the scholars who have contributed to lifelong learning theory. This theory suggests that learning is a lifelong process that occurs throughout an individual's lifespan. Therefore, intergenerational learning occurs when individuals from different generations engage in learning activities together such as attending classes or workshops. The concept of systematic Lifelong learning was however initially expounded by UNESCO in the 1960s. This was based on the realization that education was not just a preserve of the elite or a domain of a certain age but rather a universal and lifelong process.

According to this theory encourage senior citizen teachers to continue their own learning and development. This could involve providing access to classes or training opportunities, supporting senior citizen teachers to develop their own learning plans.

**2.4. Social Learning Theory:** Albert Bandura, who is most closely associated with social learning theory. The work of [Albert Bandura \(1969, 1986\)](#) spans much of the rich literature in social learning theory. Bandura's model of social learning theory revolves around the individual having the opportunity to model a best example of a desired behaviour. Four variables within the modelling paradigm are necessary for learning to occur. These four are attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation ([Tennyson, R. D.](#)). According to this theory, learning occurs through observation and imitation of others. Therefore,

intergenerational learning occurs when younger generations observe and learn from the behaviours and actions of senior citizens.

According to this theory it facilitates opportunities for younger generations to observe and learn from senior citizen teachers. This could involve setting up job shadowing programs or creating opportunities for senior citizens teachers to have a guest speak or lectures at schools or community events.

**2.5. Intergenerational Transmission Theory:** This theory has been developed by a range of scholars in sociology, anthropology, and psychology, including Melvin Kohn, Clifford Geertz, and Urie Bronfenbrenner. This theory suggests that knowledge, values, and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to another through socialization. Therefore, intergenerational learning occurs when younger generations learn from the experiences, beliefs, and values of senior citizen teachers in their families and communities.

According to this theory, create opportunities for senior citizen teachers to share their values, beliefs and experiences with younger generations. This could involve setting up intergenerational discussion groups or organizing events where senior citizen teachers can share their life stories with younger generations.

**2.6. Cognitive Load Theory:** This theory has been developed by John Sweller. This theory focuses on how the human brain processes and retains information. In the context of intergenerational learning, this theory can be used to study how different generations process and remember information differently and how this affects their ability to learn from each other. Cognitive load theory by using our knowledge of the relations between working memory and long-term memory has been able to generate instructional procedures that to some can appear counterintuitive. [Sweller, J. \(2011\)](#). Primary knowledge frequently consists of generic-cognitive skills that are important to human survival and cannot be taught because they are acquired unconsciously while secondary knowledge is usually domain-specific in nature and requires explicit instruction in **education and training contexts** [Sweller, J. \(2019\)](#).

According to this Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) can be assumed to senior citizen teachers as it helps us understand how they may experience

cognitive overload when returning to the classroom or engaging in other learning activities. This can include transitioning to new technology, learning new teaching methods and adjusting to a new classroom environment. CLT suggests that the cognitive load can be reduced by breaking down the learning process into smaller steps providing clear instructions and goals and creating a supportive learning environment with feedback. By applying CLT principles, it can make learning more effective and efficient for senior citizen teachers.

**2.7. Situated Learning Theory:** This theory was developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. This theory suggests that learning is context-dependent and occurs through active participation in meaningful activities within a specific social context. In the context of intergenerational learning, the theory can be used to examine how different generations learn from each other through shared activities and experiences. [Catalano \(2015\)](#) explored the efficacy of situated learning to facilitate the transfer of knowledge from an instructional situation to its application in environments outside the classroom

According to this Situated Learning Theory (SLT) learning is not just a cognitive process but also involves social, cultural and contextual factors. In the context of senior citizen teachers, SLT can relate to continued learning through participation in communities of practice, serving as mentors and participating in activities that allow them to continue their learning in real-life situations. Two instructional models that are in accord with a situatedness perspective are presented: cognitive apprenticeship and problem-based learning. [Renkl, A \(2002\)](#). By applying SLT principles, senior citizen teachers can stay connected to the education community, continue to contribute to the development of new teachers, and continue their own learning and growth.

### 3. CONCLUSION:

Intergenerational learning involves involving different generations in activities to generate additional benefits that go beyond single-generation activities. Senior citizen teachers can bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the education profession and play an important role in promoting lifelong learning and development for both teachers and students. The concept of

intergenerational learning is explained by various theories, including social capital theory, activity theory, lifelong learning theory, social learning theory, intergenerational transmission theory, and cognitive load theory, all of which emphasize the importance of social networks, learning activities, personal development, observation, and shared values and experiences.

Some of the benefits for senior citizen teachers in intergenerational learning may include, continued engagement in their profession and the opportunity to share their knowledge and skills with younger generations, increased social connectedness and reduced social isolation and opportunity for personal growth and development through interaction with younger generations. In the same way some of the benefits for younger generations may include, exposure to different perspectives and experiences, opportunity to learn from the wisdom and experience of senior citizen teachers, increased empathy, understanding, and respect for older generations and development of social skills and connections with older generations.

Senior citizen teachers can share their knowledge, skills, and experiences with younger generations, helping to transfer valuable expertise to the next generation of teachers and students. Intergenerational learning can help to reduce social isolation and promote social connectedness between older and younger generations. This can lead to increased empathy, understanding and respect between generations. Intergenerational learning can provide unique learning opportunities that may not be possible through single generation activities. For example, students can benefit from the wisdom and experience of senior citizen teachers, while senior citizen teachers can benefit from the energy and enthusiasm of younger generations. Senior citizen teachers can play an important role in mentoring and supporting younger teachers, helping them to develop their teaching practices and enhance their professional development. Intergenerational learning can provide opportunities for senior citizen teachers to remain engaged in the education profession which can lead to increased retention rates and a more diverse workforce.

Several workshops or intergenerational learning programs can be implemented such as senior mentorship programs for new teachers, community service projects that involve multiple

generations, Intergenerational literacy programs where senior citizens read to young children, Intergenerational fitness programs, Intergenerational technology workshops where senior citizens teach younger generations how to use technology and Intergenerational arts programs such as music or painting classes and many more.

Overall, intergenerational learning with senior citizen teachers has the potential to provide a range of benefits for both teachers and students. By creating opportunities for different generations to learn from each other and work together that can promote lifelong learning and development, reduce social isolation and enhance the quality of education for everyone involved.

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