What do older people learn from young people? Intergenerational learning in ‘day centre’ community settings in Malta

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200 day centre attendees

# Abstract

This study analyses what motivates older people to attend ‘day centres’ in Malta and what they believe that they derive from young people who carry out their placements at these day ‘centres’ These young people, who are aged 16–17, attend a vocational college in Malta and are studying health and social care. The study is based on a qualitative approach and employs the usage of focus groups. The main findings are that the elderly see the students as helping them on an emotional level by giving them encouragement, and on a practical level, by offering them insights that help them in modern-day life.

# Outcome

The intergenerational learning experienced by the older people was... evidenced when one of the service users noted how her interactions with the students at the day centre allowed her to ‘make more sense’ of the teenage members of her (extended) family, at home. She mentioned how hard it was to ‘understand the technology of today’s world with Facebook, Twitter, chatting and the like ...’ She added that she was eternally grateful to ‘one of the
students who had taken the initiative to bring her laptop along and explain these things’ to her. She explained further that the student’s explanations enabled her to relate to younger family members easier. Another mentioned that, to her, Facebook was an ‘important tool’. This was because it allowed her to attract the interest of her teenage granddaughter... In terms of the intergenerational learning experienced by the older people, it is clear that they did not only benefit from the students’ teaching them about technologies but also by seeing the important role that technology had in their lives, and thereby being more appreciative of its influence on the lives of their own younger relatives." (Spiteri, 2016; p. 247).