Developing arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs between older adults and young children

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Abstract: Arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs for older adults and young children promote interaction between both groups and cultivate participants' creativity and aesthetic sense. Body experience and participation in art play pivotal roles in the physical and psychological development of older adults. The literature supports this argument. The body experience of older adults and their regular participation in art can be promoted through developing arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs between older adults and young children. This article conducted a document analysis of the development direction of these programs, which include visual arts creation, music co-creation, storytelling and drama performances, and pottery workshops. The concluding section provides an activity plan. It is hoped that such an exploration can broaden intergenerational learning programs for older adults and young children, and enhance the physical and psychological development of older adults.

Keywords: Arts, Intergenerational learning, Older adults, Young children.

1. Introduction

Society is facing population aging, a decreasing fertility rate, and reduced adherence to the traditional practice of filial piety. Society as a whole has negative stereotypes about older adults, who are regarded as unproductive burdens on their families and society. Older adults experience ageism from others as well as their own as they grow older, they even have low regard for themselves, seeing themselves as weak, sickly, and unable to work. Hence, how to help them approach aging as a stage of growth and self-discovery rather than decline, which is extremely

important (Hu, 2023; Shih, 2022, 2024; Shih, Ku, Tseng, Chiang & Lin, 2024).

The propagation and development of culture depend on the application of individual aesthetic abilities to enhance the richness and quality of human life. In the current era of interdisciplinary integration, the cultural industry can facilitate global economic development. By cultivating their aesthetic ability, older adults can develop their talents for diverse pursuits to ultimately live a happy, fulfilling, and beautiful life based on art and culture and successfully age. Body experience and participation in art play pivotal roles in the physical and psychological development of older adults. The literature supports this argument. The body experience of older adults and their regular participation in art can be promoted through developing arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs between older adults and young

children. In fact, arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs for older adults and young children promote interaction between both groups and cultivate participants' creativity and aesthetic sense. Engaging in artistic activities together allows older adults and young children to form deep emotional connections as they learn and grow with each other throughout the creative process. In these programs, the exploration of diverse art forms—such as visual arts creation, music co-creation, storytelling and drama performances, and pottery workshops—fosters mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between generations. This article explores arts-oriented intergenerational learning

programs between older adults and young children to assist teachers in developing similar curriculums. Hence, the researcher used documentary analysis methods to explore how to develop arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs between older adults and young children. Teachers, especially, can gain a deeper understanding of the principles and significance of arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs by reading this article, and older adults can develop their talents for diverse pursuits to ultimately live a happy, fulfilling, and beautiful life based on art and culture and successfully age (Davenport, Lawton, Manifold, 2020; Roy, Smilowitz, Bhatt et al., 2023; Shih, 2022; Wikström, 2024).

2. Research Method

Documentary analysis is the research which involves documents as the data, and it is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give meaning on a topic. Document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material (Aimee Grant, 2022; Bowen, 2009; Fischer, 2006). The researcher used the documentary analysis method to analyze studies related to the arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs for older adults and young children.

3. Development Direction of Arts-Oriented Intergenerational Learning Programs

Arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs for older adults and young children promote interaction between both groups and cultivate participants' creativity and aesthetic sense. Engaging in artistic activities together allows older adults and young children to form deep emotional connections as they learn and grow with each other throughout the creative process. In these programs, the exploration of diverse art forms—such as visual arts, music, drama, and crafts—fosters mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between generations. This article explores arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs between older adults and young children to assist teachers in developing similar curriculums. The following sections respectively introduce visual arts creation, music co-creation, storytelling and drama performances, and pottery workshops.

3.1. Visual Arts Creation

Collaboration is a powerful tool that can ignite creativity and foster a sense of community among artists. In recent years, there has been a rise in collaborative art projects that invite multiple individuals to come together and contribute their unique perspectives. Collaborative art projects, such as collages, paper crafts, and watercolor paintings, can build connections between young children and older adults. These activities invite younger participants to express themselves artistically using accessible materials, which builds confidence and creativity. Meanwhile, older adults can add depth and personal significance to the shared projects by contributing their memories and life stories. Children often admire the skills and stories of older participants, and older adults enjoy witnessing the curiosity and creativity of younger participants, fostering mutual appreciation and cultivating empathy, patience, and a sense of purpose across generations, enriching the lives of all involved. Planning an intergenerational visual arts project involves several key steps to ensure a successful and engaging experience for participants, as described in the following guide (Lynch, 2024; Saito, 2007; Shih, 2020a).

3.1.1. Define Objectives
3.1.1.1. Purpose
Determine your goal for the project (e.g., skill development, self-expression, or community building).

3.1.1.2. Target Audience
Identify the age group and background of participants and tailor the project accordingly.

3.1.2. Choose a Theme or Concept
3.1.2.1. Theme Selection

Decide on a central theme that resonates with participants, such as nature, emotions, or cultural heritage. In the context of arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs, cultural heritage may be a particularly appropriate theme, allowing participants to explore and celebrate their diverse backgrounds, traditions, and histories. Culture represents the vitality of social activities and the traditional value. It also manifests the unique features of social and ethnic culture. Art and culture succeed and convey this idea to share art and value of historical heritage with others. Focusing on cultural heritage can foster meaningful connections between older adults and young children as they share artistic traditions from their respective cultures. This theme not only promotes cultural understanding and appreciation but also encourages dialogue, empathy, and collaboration between participants, enriching their experience and creating a sense of community (Shih, 2020b; Yao, 2017).

3.1.2.2. Concept Development

Today, more and more complex tasks are emerging. To finish these tasks within a reasonable time, using the brainstorm ideas is necessary. Encourage participants to brainstorm ideas related to the theme, which can inspire them to think creatively about intergenerational learning, fostering connections and enhancing the educational experience for both young children and older adults (Shih, 2023; Zhang, Yang & Zhao, 2019).

3.1.3. Selecting Materials and Techniques
3.1.3.1. Materials

Gather necessary visual art supplies, such as paints, brushes, canvas, and paper. The following lists provide suggested supplies for painting and mixed media activities.

3.1.3.1.1. Painting Supplies
Suggested painting supplies include the following:
- Acrylic, watercolor, or tempera paints.
- Various sizes and styles of brushes (flat, round, detail, etc.).
- Palettes for mixing colors.
- Canvas and canvas boards of varying sizes based on project needs.
- Thick watercolor or mixed media paper.

3.1.3.1.2. Mixed Media Supplies
Suggested mixed media supplies include the following:
- Collage materials, including magazines, colored paper, and fabric scraps, which offer a range of textures and colors ideal for creating layered designs and visual variety.
- Adhesives, including glue sticks, Mod Podge, and tacky glue, based on project needs. Mod Podge is ideal for projects needing a glossy or matte seal.
- Scissors, including child-safe scissors to allow younger participants to freely experiment with cutting shapes.
- Markers and pens, including permanent markers and gel pens for adding fine details, outlines, and text to bring the project to life.

3.1.3.2. Optional Enhancements
Optional additions to enhance visual art projects include the following:
- Stencils or templates for creating shapes and patterns.
- Texture tools, including sponges, brushes, and palette knives.
- Natural materials, such as leaves, flowers, or twigs, for printing or collaging.
- Music or background sounds to create an inspiring atmosphere during the activity.

3.1.3.3. Techniques
Introduce various art techniques (e.g., painting, collage, and drawing) for participants to explore.

3.1.4. Plan the Schedule
3.1.4.1. Timeline
Create a project timeline, including preparation, creation, and presentation phases.

3.1.4.2. Learning Sessions
Determine the necessary number and duration of learning sessions.

3.1.5. Creating a Collaborative Environment
3.1.5.1. Group Dynamics
Foster collaboration by encouraging participants to share ideas and assist one another.

3.1.5.2. Facilitation
Facilitate discussions and provide support without imposing your vision.

3.1.6. Promoting Reflection and Feedback
3.1.6.1. Discussion and Reflection
Learning has become a part of social development and has strengthened lifelong learning in the new social era. Discussion and reflection in learning process play an important role in the field of education. Discussion and reflection are the key for learners to transform concrete experience into abstract concepts. Hold discussions and reflections after each session to reflect on the creative process and encourage participants to learn from each other (Chang, 2019; Dao & Khiatthong, 2024).

3.1.6.2. Feedback
Feedback serves as a powerful tool in the realm of education, providing students with the guidance they need to excel. Constructive criticism, when given correctly, can be a beacon of insight, illuminating the path toward academic and personal growth. Encourage participants to give each other constructive feedback to enhance learning and growth. Emphasize the purpose of feedback as a tool for growth, not criticism. Create a supportive environment where participants feel safe to share and receive feedback (Connolly, 2024).

3.1.7. Organize a Showcase
3.1.7.1. Exhibition
Plan a final exhibition for participants to display their work.

3.1.7.2. Celebration
Celebrate the achievements of participants with an opening event to which family and friends may be invited.

3.1.8. Evaluating the Project
3.1.8.1. Assessment
Gather feedback from participants regarding their experiences and project outcomes.

3.1.8.2. Improvements
Identify areas for improvement that can benefit future projects.
By following these steps, you can create a meaningful and enriching visual arts project that fosters participant creativity and collaboration.

3.2. Music Co-Creation

Arrange opportunities for young children to freely explore rhythms and melodies with simple instruments, such as percussion instruments. Older adults can provide guidance and share history or stories behind the instruments. Music co-creation activities enhance emotional connection and improve social interaction between older adults and young children. The following framework can be used to organize music co-creation activities.

3.2.1. Activity Outline
3.2.1.1. Setting the Stage

Create a comfortable and inviting space with various percussion instruments (e.g., drums, shakers, and tambourines). Arrange seating that encourages interaction between children and older adults.

3.2.1.2. Instrument Introduction

Allow participants to freely explore the instruments, experimenting with different sounds and rhythms. Older adults can demonstrate how to play each instrument and share stories about their cultural significance or background for young children.

3.2.1.3. Rhythm Exploration

Facilitate group activities that allow young children and older adults to create simple rhythms together. Encourage older adults to guide young children in clapping or playing along with a steady beat. Introduce simple melodic instruments (e.g., xylophones or maracas) and encourage participants to create their own melodies. Have older adults share songs from their youth, inviting young children to join in and add their own rhythms.

3.2.1.4. Storytelling Through Music

Encourage older adults to narrate stories or historical anecdotes related to the music being played. Allow young children to demonstrate their understanding of these stories through music, either by mimicking rhythms or inventing their own.

3.2.1.5. Collaborative Performance

Organize a short performance for participants to showcase their creations together. Celebrate the collaboration by encouraging applause, fostering a sense of accomplishment and community between older adults and young children.

3.2.1.6. Reflection and Sharing

Conclude the session by having participants form a circle and share their favorite moments or what they learned. Encourage feedback and suggestions for future learning sessions. How you could structure this: (1) Setting the tone: invite everyone to form a circle and ensure the atmosphere is warm and inclusive. Begin with a brief statement of gratitude for everyone's participation, setting a positive tone for reflection. (2) Sharing highlights: prompt participants to share their favorite moments or something meaningful they learned during the session. Emphasize that there's no right or wrong answer and encourage everyone to listen respectfully. (3) Encouraging feedback: after the sharing round, invite participants to offer constructive feedback or suggest topics or activities they'd like to explore in future sessions. This can empower them and provide valuable insights for improvement. (4) Closing statement: end with a unifying statement that ties together the session's key themes, expresses appreciation for the group, and looks forward to continued learning together (van Diggele, Burgess & Mellis, 2020).

3.2.2. Benefits
3.2.2.1. Emotional Connection

Music fosters a sense of belonging and encourages emotional expression.

3.2.2.2. Social Interaction
Musical collaboration encourages communication and teamwork.

3.2.2.3. Cognitive Engagement
Both age groups can enhance their cognitive skills through rhythm and melody exploration.
This approach promotes creativity and strengthens intergenerational bonds through the shared experience of creating music.

3.3. Storytelling and Drama Performance
Creating and performing a story together may involve older adults guiding the development of the storyline while young children take on roles in the performance, which enhances language expression and creative thinking, providing an opportunity for both generations to learn from and communicate with each other. The activity can be structured according to the following process.

3.3.1. Story Creation
To create the performance storyline, older adults can choose a topic, such as traditional stories, historical events, or their personal life experiences, and gradually develop the plot. Children can also contribute their ideas, creating new scenarios or characters together.

3.3.2. Role Assignment and Rehearsal
Each child can choose or be assigned a role and practice understanding the feelings and actions of that character during rehearsals. Older adults can provide guidance or demonstrations, helping young children to better embody their roles.

3.3.3. Improvisation
During storytelling, children should be encouraged to improvise, which develops their adaptability and creativity. Older adults can also participate in the performance or serve as narrators, enriching the story.

3.3.4. Performance and Interaction
Family and community members can be invited to watch a small performance at the conclusion of the program. After the show, provide opportunities for feedback and discussion, allowing young children and older adults to share their experiences and insights.
Performance activities enable both generations to share stories and create cherished memories together, fostering a warm environment for intergenerational learning.

3.4. Pottery Workshop
Hands-on activities like pottery, weaving, and knitting allow older adults to pass down traditional crafts and young children to experience the depth of their cultural heritage. These activities not only promote skill transmission but also enable young children to understand the cultural assets of different generations. Hands-on art programs can help older adults feel a sense of purpose and value, while offering young children a unique learning experience that cultivates their appreciation for art and respect for older adults. When implementing a pottery workshop, designing the program to suit the age and skill levels of participants is essential, particularly for intergenerational activities involving both older adults and young children. The following steps offer suggestions for conducting a pottery workshop.

3.4.1. Set Objectives
Define the specific goals of the workshop, such as passing down traditional skills, enhancing creativity, or promoting intergenerational interaction. Choose a type of project for the workshop to focus on, such as simple pottery pieces or sculptures, allowing young children to participate and older adults to showcase their skills.

3.4.2. Arrange Venue and Materials

Choose a suitable venue for pottery work that has good ventilation and is equipped with sufficient worktables, chairs, and a handwashing station. Next, prepare essential materials, such as clay, sculpting tools, and potter's wheels. Opt for child-safe materials to ensure everyone can participate safely. Finally, arrange for kiln services or equipment so that pieces can be fired after completion.

3.4.3. Design Course Content
3.4.3.1. Introduction and Demonstration

Have an instructor or older adult with pottery skills introduce basic techniques and discuss the cultural significance of the art form.

3.4.3.2. Step-by-Step Process

Guide young children and older adults to learn each step, such as kneading clay, shaping the piece, and carving details. Group activities can be arranged for older adults to mentor children, fostering interaction.

3.4.3.3. Creative Freedom

Encourage participants to create their own pottery pieces, adding personal touches and showcasing their creativity.

3.4.3.4. Encourage Intergenerational Interaction

Arrange one-on-one or small group collaborations between older adults and young children, encouraging older adults to share their pottery-making experiences or tell traditional stories, which allows young children to appreciate cultural heritage while learning new techniques. Hold an "interactive showcase" segment in which young children can present their creations and ask older adults for feedback, fostering respect and communication skills (Shih, 2023).

3.4.3.5. Complete and Display the Artwork

After the pieces are completed, fire them in a kiln and arrange a pickup day or hold a small exhibition for participants. Invite family and community members to the exhibition, allowing participants to experience a sense of achievement and pride.

3.4.3.6. Workshop Reflection and Evaluation

After completing the workshop, arrange a reflection session for participants to share their insights and experiences, focusing on intergenerational interactions between older adults and young children. Collect feedback from participants to evaluate program effectiveness and provide references for future improvement.

A pottery workshop designed in this way not only allows older adults to pass down skills and find a sense of self-worth, but also deepens young children's understanding of culture, fosters an interest in art, and nurtures intergenerational respect.

4. Activity Plan: Intergenerational Rhythm and Melody Creation

In particular, engagement with creative activities can have a crucial role in later life, as learning and participation in peer groups seem to be strongly connected with subjective wellbeing and self-evaluated quality of life. Musical engagement, such as listening to music, singing, playing an instrument, or composing new music, has been considered one of the creative activities most effective for fostering wellbeing of older adults in a holistic way (Siltainsuu & Peltola, 2024).

4.1. Objectives
- Enhance emotional connections between older adults and young children.
- Promote social interaction and collaboration through music.

- Encourage creativity and expression through rhythm and melody exploration.

4.2. Materials Needed
- Percussion instruments (e.g., drum, tambourines, hand drums, clapping sticks).
- Melodic instruments (e.g., xylophones, maracas).
- Music playback device (for optional background music).
- Space for movement and group interaction.

4.3. Warm-Up (10 minutes)
Gather participants in a circle to create a welcoming atmosphere. Begin the session with a simple clapping exercise: have everyone clap their hands in time with a steady beat. Encourage older adults to demonstrate different clapping patterns, which the children can mimic.

4.4. Rhythm Exploration (15 minutes)
Distribute percussion instruments to each participant. Ask older adults to lead the group in creating a simple rhythm. They can use different instruments to showcase variations in sound. After a few rounds, invite young children to suggest additional rhythms or patterns, allowing them to experiment and take turns leading.

4.5. Melody Creation (20 minutes)
Introduce and briefly demonstrate how to play melodic instruments, such as xylophones or maracas. Encourage older adults to guide young children in playing simple melodies. Organize small groups for older adults and young children to create their own melodies together and encourage them to discuss their choices.

4.6. Song Sharing (15 minutes)
Invite older adults to share music from their youth and explain the meaning or background behind the songs. Encourage young children to listen attentively and then join in singing, adding their rhythms with percussion instruments. Facilitate a call-and-response activity in which older adults sing a line, and young children echo it back.

4.7. Creative Performance (15 minutes)
Allow each group to perform the rhythms and melodies they created for one another. Encourage older adults to provide positive feedback and share stories about their music-related experiences.

4.8. Reflection and Closing (10 minutes)
Gather participants back in a circle and ask them to share what they enjoyed about the activities and any new things they learned from each other. Conclude with a group song that everyone can sing together, reinforcing the bond created through the experience.

4.9. Additional Tips
Keep the atmosphere relaxed and supportive; emphasize that making music is about fun and creativity, not perfection. Use visual aids or hand gestures for young children to follow rhythms easily. Consider recording the sessions (with permission) to share with participants later as a keepsake.

This structured approach to arts-oriented intergenerational learning programs for older adults and young children can create an enriching experience that not only nurtures musical skills but also strengthens relationships between generations.

5. The Activity of Music Co-Creation: "Intergenerational Learning: Energetic Taiko Drumming"

The activity of music co-creation refers to a collaborative process where participants come together to create music collectively. In this activity, individuals contribute their ideas, skills, and creativity to develop rhythms, melodies, or even entire compositions. This process often emphasizes interaction, communication, and mutual respect among participants, fostering a sense of connection and shared purpose. The researcher and a preschool teacher designed an activity. The activity "Intergenerational Learning: Energetic Taiko Drumming" (Figure 1) sounds highly engaging and inspiring, combining the wisdom and energy of different generations to create a beneficial learning experience for both body and mind. Below are the activity design and implementation suggestions, along with the potential values and impacts of the activity:

5.1. Activity Goals

Enhance cross-generational interaction and emotional connection. Help older adults maintain physical health and a sense of social participation, while cultivating children's sense of rhythm and collaboration skills. Promote artistic creation and cultural heritage, particularly through the application and innovation of drumming culture.

5.2. Activity Structure

5.2.1. Warm-Up Phase

Begin with light physical activities or rhythm exercises suitable for participants of all ages.

5.2.2. Basic Skill Instruction

Professional instructors or experienced elders demonstrate fundamental drumming techniques and rhythms.

5.2.3. Improvisation and Collaborative Performance

Divide participants into groups for simple drum ensembles, encouraging older adults and young children to co-create rhythms, culminating in a small performance.

5.2.4. Reflection and Sharing

Conclude the activity by inviting participants to share their feelings, deepening the interactive experience.

5.3. Materials and Venue

5.3.1. Drumming Equipment

Provide lightweight and safe drums, such as handheld drums, djembe, or modified taiko drums, for easy handling by participants.

5.3.2. Venue Setup

Choose a spacious and accessible space to accommodate both older adults and young children.

5.4. Roles in Cross-Generational Collaboration

5.4.1. Role of Older Adults

Share their musical insights and life stories, serving as cultural inheritors and mentors.

5.4.2. Role of Young Children

Bring creativity and vitality to the activity, while learning the values of respect and cooperation.

5.5. Potential Impacts of the Activity

5.5.1. Emotional Connection and Social Interaction

Cross-generational collaboration enhances mutual empathy and care, especially for isolated older adults and young children who need more social interaction, helping to foster supportive social relationships.

5.5.2. Health and Psychological Benefits

Drumming combines rhythmic movement and physical coordination, benefiting older adults in maintaining health (e.g., improving cardiovascular function and muscle activity) and supporting young children's development (e.g., enhancing hand-eye coordination and sense of rhythm).

5.5.3. Cultural Learning and Creative Development

Drumming is an activity characterised by percussive instruments with different functions. Drumming is not only a musical form but also a tool for cultural heritage. Participants can learn about the cultural significance of drumming while expressing their creativity (Agha Rita Oluwadarasimi, Oderanti, Omolayo Folake & Alao Temiloluwa Oluwakemi, 2021).

5.5.4. Educational Extendability

Intergenerational learning activities can inspire schools and communities to develop more cross-generational art and education programs, achieving diverse learning and social participation goals.

Figure 1.
Intergenerational learning: Energetic taiko drumming.

The intergenerational learning course is "Intergenerational Learning: Energetic Taiko Drumming." (Figure 1) Older adults and young children create a beneficial learning experience for both body and mind between them, and promote older adults' well-being.

6. Reflections

As aging populations grow and diversify, we are increasingly recognizing the importance of intergenerational learning. While the concept is not new, it has been overlooked in social policy and educational programming for decades. Intergenerational learning activities most often involve children and older adults. Their learning experiences are defined in various ways. Some focus on the knowledge and know-how that the generations exchange. Others emphasize personal and social benefits as old and young share stories. The learning process can be unidirectional, with older adults passing on their knowledge to the young. More often, the learning is mutual, with benefits and contributions coming from both generations. To address aging populations holistically, it is important to address the many dimensions of an older person's life. The arts, not only as activities but also as a field of research, are contributing to our understanding of intergenerational relationships through a rich understanding of creativity and expression across diverse populations. In fact, older adults are at particular risk of social isolation. This condition significantly affects health; on the contrary, social involvement can be extremely advantageous. In this context, intergenerational programs improve interactions between different ages. Hence, given the widely acknowledged benefits of intergenerational programs (Brady, 2018; Cohen-Mansfield & Muff, 2023; Gualano, Voglino, Bert, Thomas, Camussi & Siliquini, 2018; Kagaba Amina G., 2024). This article explores the development direction of these programs, which include visual arts creation, music co-creation, storytelling and drama performances, and pottery workshops. The concluding section provides an activity plan. It is hoped that such an exploration can broaden intergenerational learning programs for older adults and young children, and enhance the physical and psychological development between them, and promote promote older adults' well-being.

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