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The University of the Third Age and Active Ageing

European and Asian-Pacific Perspectives

Springer

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Chapter 1
Active Ageing Through Lifelong Learning: The University of the Third Age

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From Active Ageing…

The notion that remaining active in later life holds various benefits for older persons has a long lineage in ageing studies. In the 1960s, activity theorists argued that ageing successfully depended on the maintenance of activity patterns and values typical of middle age (Havighurst, 1963). Although this standpoint achieved much acclaim initially, it was eventually criticised as idealistic and unrealistic. Many older adults do not only face biological limitations in keeping up with a middle-age lifestyle, but are also shackled by economic, political and social structures of society—most notably, mandatory retirement—that constrain and prevent them from remaining active (Walker, 1980, 1981). As a result, the 1980s experienced a shift in ageing studies away from activity rationales, and towards a focus on the political economy of old age and the distribution of resources in later life (Estes, 1979; Guillemard, 1981; Phillipson, 1982). However, this trend reversed itself during the 1990s as the World Health Organization (WHO) (1994) emphasised the advantageous link between activity and health. During the United Nations' International Year of Older Persons (1999), the WHO acclaimed a strong association between activity and opportunities for healthy living in later life and highlighted the need to create opportunities for older people to age actively (Kalache, 1999).

The WHO's discourse on 'active ageing' found immediate support in both policy and popular circles, as it surfaced at a time when the issue of population ageing was forcing the dismantling of the traditional conception of the life course that equated the oldest phase of life with frailty and liability (Boudiny & Mortelmans, 2011). As this standpoint focused on encouraging the participation of older adults in society, whilst emphasising the resources and knowledge that older people possess, many an advocacy group took on 'active ageing' as their *cri de guerre*. Heartened by such

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developments, the WHO presented a policy framework on active ageing at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, wherein 'active ageing' was defined as

> …the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. Active ageing applies to both individuals and population groups…The word "active" refers to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force.
>
> (WHO, 2002: 12)

The WHO's sponsorship of an 'active ageing' discourse was, in many ways, a positive move in the right direction, transcending ageing policy from 'the placid backwaters of politics into the mainstream of economic, social and cultural debate' (Salter & Salter, 2018: 1069). For Walker, the WHO made two important contributions to global discourses on active ageing:

> First, the WHO policy added further weight to the case for a refocusing of active aging away from employment and toward a consideration of all of the different factors that contribute to well-being. Specifically, it argued for the linkage, in policy terms, between employment, health, and participation and echoed the similar case made within the European Union. Second, and again along similar lines as the contributions of the European Commission and European scientists, it emphasized the critical importance of a life-course perspective. In other words, to prevent some of the negative consequences associated with later life, it is essential to influence individual behavior and its policy context at earlier stages of the life course.
>
> (Walker, 2009: 84)

In the original policy framework, WHO (2002) hinged active ageing upon the three pillars of health, participation and security. Primarily, when the risk factors for chronic diseases and functional decline were kept low, people were expected to enjoy 'both a longer quantity and quality of life; they will remain healthy and able to manage their own lives as they grow older; fewer older adults will need costly medical treatment and care services' (ibid.: 45–6). With regard to participation, the WHO advocated that when employment, education, health and social services support older persons' participation in socio-economic, cultural and spiritual activities, they 'make a productive contribution to society in both paid and unpaid activities as they age' (ibid.: 46). Finally, it was contended that when programmes address the social, financial and physical security needs of older people, they are 'ensured of protection, dignity and care in the event that they are no longer able to support and protect themselves' (ibid.). In due course, and highly noteworthy considering the ethos of this edited volume, an updated report of the WHO's landmark document added lifelong learning as the fourth pillar of active ageing, The notion of 'active ageing' was thus redefined as the 'process of optimizing opportunities for health, *lifelong learning*, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age' (International Longevity Centre Brazil, 2015: 43—italics added). Whilst in 2002 the active ageing framework did acknowledge that lifelong learning—along with formal education and literacy—is an important factor that facilitates participation, health and security as people grow older, in 2015 the placing of lifelong

learning as a fourth pillar of the official 'active ageing' discourse signalled strongly that learning is important not only to productive ageing, but also to the reinforcement of well-being in later life. To cite the updated report, lifelong learning

> …is a pillar that supports all other pillars of Active Ageing. It equips us to stay healthy, and remain relevant and engaged in society. It therefore empowers and gives greater assurance to personal security. At the societal level, people in all walks of life and at all ages who are informed and in possession of current skills contribute to economic competitiveness, employment, sustainable social protection and citizen participation.

(International Longevity Centre Brazil, 2015: 48)

The integration of 'lifelong learning' into active ageing discourse functioned to safeguard the right of persons to age positively since the key role that learning may play in promoting quality of life and well-being in later life has long been recognised by academics and policy makers (Findsen & Formosa, 2016a). As a recent study concluded,

> …older adults' participation [in learning] is independently and positively associated with their psychological wellbeing, even among those typically classified as 'vulnerable'… continuous participation in non-formal lifelong learning may help sustain older adults' psychological wellbeing. It provides older learners, even those who are most vulnerable, with a compensatory strategy to strengthen their reserve capacities, allowing them to be autonomous and fulfilled…

(Narushima, Liu, & Diestelkamp, 2018: 651)

It is also noteworthy that the results of this research investigation highlighted the significance of strategic and unequivocal promotion of community-based non-formal lifelong learning opportunities, for the encouragement of inclusive, equitable and caring active ageing societies. This is, of course, not the same as saying that the WHO's discourse on active ageing is devoid of lacunae and limitations, and despite its popular status in ageing policy, the 'active ageing' paradigm also received its fair share of criticism. Boudiny (2013) argued that the active ageing framework tends to be used in a narrow manner, to promote physical activity and prolong labour participation, and often used interchangeably with 'productive ageing' and 'healthy ageing'. Moreover, the active ageing paradigm has been found to be incomplete as far as frail and vulnerable persons are concerned, especially with respect to long-term care contexts (van Malderen, Mets, De Vriendt, & Gorus, 2013). On similar lines, Paz, Doron, and Tur-Sinai (2018) contended that a gender-based approach is missing within the existing active ageing framework. Nevertheless, despite such possible lacunae there can be no doubt as to the contribution of the active ageing discourse towards the challenging of stereotypes which characterise later life as a period of passivity and dependency, by placing an opposing emphasis on autonomy and participation (Formosa, 2017).

…to Lifelong Learning in Later Life

Lifelong learning in later life refers to the process in which older adults, 'individually and in association with others, engage in direct encounter and then purposefully reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to and seek to integrate their ways of knowing' (Mercken, 2010: 9). Although statistical research on the participation rates of older persons in learning activities remains sparse, a critical review of available literature elicited three constant findings—namely a lower percentage of elder learners compared to younger peers, a sharp decline of participation as people reached their seventieth decade, and that typical learners are middle-class women (Findsen & Formosa, 2016b). In the USA, the 2005 National Household Education Survey found that 23% of adults aged 65-plus participated in a non-accredited learning activity organised by community or business institutions in the previous year (O'Donnell, 2006). In Europe, Eurostat (2018) reported that in 2017, across the EU-28 Member States, 4.9% of the population aged 55–74 participated in formal and non-formal educational activities, although this figure reaches 5.8% if one only takes into consideration the 15 EU-Member States. Research on the participation of older adults in solely non-formal learning activities elicits higher results, as in the case of the survey conducted by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics which found that 22.8% of the sample aged 55–74 participated in a learning activity in the previous 12 months (Villar & Celdrán, 2013). With regard to the preferred subject matter of older learners, older adults are generally stereotyped as favouring 'expressive' over 'instrumental' forms of learning. However, whilst the interest of older adults to engage in expressive learning programmes can never be overstated, many older learners are highly interested to learn computer skills and subjects in the natural and physical sciences such as biology, marine habitats, geology and astronomy (Talmage et al., 2015).

A key debate in older adult learning is concerned not with 'whether we can or cannot teach or retrain an older adult' but 'to what end?' and 'why?. Primarily, late-life learning was commended for assisting adults to adjust to transformations that accompany 'old age' such as decreasing physical strength and health, the retirement transition, reduced income, death of spouse, and changing social and civic obligations (McClusky, 1974). Glendenning and Battersby (1990), and subsequently Formosa (2011, 2018), posited a more radical agenda and bestowed late-life learning the task of achieving the 'liberation of elders'—that is, empowering older persons with the advocacy skills necessary to counteract the social and financial disadvantages brought on by neoliberal politics of ageing. From a humanistic point of view, learning in later life was perceived as a 'personal quest', a necessary activity if older adults are to achieve the potential within them (Percy, 1990). This rationale prioritised 'process' over 'content' by stressing that the role of an educator "is to facilitate the process of learning for the learner" rather than "persuade him [sic] to social action or to be dissatisfied if a certain political awareness is not achieved" (ibid.: 236). Finally, transcendence rationales argued that learning must not let adults forget that they are 'old' and should enable learners 'to know themselves as a whole, as they

really are, in the light of finitude and at the horizon of death' (Moody, 1990: 37). Consequently, lifelong learning in later life arises as an opportunity to explore goals that younger peers are too busy to pursue, such as developing a reflective mode of thinking and contemplating the meaning of life. Whilst these stances hinge the rationale for lifelong learning in later life on different tangents, each has positive contributions to make, and if taken together there will be no doubt of the potential of older adult learning to bring the 'need for economic progress and social inclusiveness in tandem with recognition of individual desires for personal development and growth as people age' (Withnall, 2010: 116). Indeed, the blending of active ageing and lifelong learning discourses leads to the recognition that learning takes place in a variety of contexts—such as formal classrooms, self-directed learning, voluntary organisations, residential and nursing homes and intergenerational settings—to the possible outcome of three key types of benefits:

- *Psychological well-being*. The midlife-to-ageing transition brings a number of possible changes such as decreasing physical strength and health, exit from the labour market, reduced income, widowhood and changing social and civic obligations, amongst others (Maginess, 2017). Late-life learning has the potential to mitigate against such turning points and enable older persons to achieve higher levels of life enjoyment, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-satisfaction and wide-ranging coping strategies (von Humboldt, 2016).
- *Social inclusion*. Ageing has an invariable effect on all incumbents in increasing their risk of social exclusion on the basis on their chronological age, and especially more so for vulnerable members on the basis of their gender, social class, geographical location, sexuality and ethnic status (Hafford-Letchfield, 2016). Older adult learning has the potential to adopt a wide-participation agenda and bring about improved levels of social support, social networking and social solidarity amongst older persons (Findsen & Formosa, 2011).
- *Empowerment*. Lifelong learning in later life can arise as an expression of older persons' need to regain power over their own lives (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990), meaning that this type of learning empowers learners through exposure to the politics of daily living (Hachem, Nikkola, & Zaidan, 2017). Indeed, education in later life should 'illuminate the social and political rights of older people' (Hafford-Letchfield, 2014: 438), to equip older adults to claim their social rights and induce social change (Formosa, 2012).

Indeed, many a research article has documented how opportunities for lifelong learning in later life act as a catalyst for healthier and socially engaged lives in old age, as well as improving older persons' opportunities to either remain in or re-enter the labour market (Findsen, Mcewan, & Mccullough, 2011; Harris & Ramos, 2013). In brief, older adult learning was found to play a vital role in maintaining cognitive functioning and capability (Boulton-Lewis & Tam, 2012; Jenkins & Mostafa, 2015); improving individuals' social relations as they interact with, and learn from, same-aged or older/younger peers (Åberg, 2016; Kimberley, Golding, & Simons, 2016); keeping up with computer and Internet-related developments (González-Palau et al., 2014; de Palo, Limone, Monacis, Ceglie, & Sinatra, 2018); supporting older

adults in gaining socio-economic resources in retirement (Lido, Osborne, Livingston, Thakuriah, & Sila-Nowicka, 2016; Talmage, Mark, Slowey, & Knopf, 2016); and strengthening personal development by bolstering empowerment, self-esteem and confidence, and positive outlooks towards life (Narushima et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018).

The University of the Third Age

Opportunities for lifelong learning in later life hold a rich tradition in many continents and countries. In the North American hemisphere, the inaugural lifelong learning institute targeting older persons, the Institute for Learning in Retirement, was established as early as 1962 and was followed by the establishment of Shepherds Centers, the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning, Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes, Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement and the indefatigable Elderhostel (Road Scholar since 2011). In Europe, key organisations involved in providing opportunities for late-life learning include the University Programmes for Older People and the Universities of the Third Age (U3As) which is, of course, the focus of this collection of chapters.

The origins of U3As can be traced to legislation passed by the French government in 1968 which obliged universities to become responsible for the provision of lifelong education. In the summer of 1972, this legislation inspired Pierre Vellas to coordinate—at the University of Toulouse—a summer programme of lectures, guided tours and other cultural activities, for retirees (Radcliffe, 1984). When the programme came to an end, the enthusiasm of participants showed no signs of abating, so that Vellas (1997) planned a new series of learning programmes for the ensuing year under the name of the University of the Third Age. In Funnell's words,

> In February 1973 a proposal to create the University of the Third Age of Toulouse was put to the Administrative Council of the International Studies and Development Faculty which had representatives of the professors, the students and the administrators as well as three external members with important international responsibilities: the directors-general of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO. The goal was to investigate what the university could do to improve the quality of life and state of health of the elderly [sic]. The programme was adopted unanimously, although without any specific budget…
>
> (Funnell, 2017: 120)

The first U3A was open to anyone who had reached statutory retirement age at that time, who was willing to pay a nominal fee. Learning activities were scheduled for daylight hours, five days a week, for eight or nine months of the year. The first curriculum at Toulouse focused on a range of gerontological subjects, although in subsequent years, subject content mainly focused on humanities. Although lectures were combined with debates, field trips and recreational opportunities, the French academic maxim of 'teachers lecture, students listen' was constantly upheld. The Toulouse initiative struck a rich vein of motivation so that, just three years later,

U3As were already established in Belgium, Switzerland, Poland, Italy, Spain and Quebec in Canada. Such popularity was due to the fact that the U3A movement, in marked contrast to the tradition of centralised educational management, provided an opportunity to sow the first seeds of educational innovation and reform. The first U3A in Britain was established in Cambridge, in July 1981, and quickly replicated in other cities and towns. The British version underwent a substantial change compared to the original French model and was founded upon three principles (Laslett, 1989): first, a Third Age principle where members are expected to take some responsibility, in particular, to ensure that any potential members might have the opportunity to join the U3A ranks; second, a self-help learning principle as members gather and immobilise themselves into learning circles, utilising as broad a selection of themes as they think fit; and finally, a mutual-aid principle as each U3A is organised on the co-operative precept, thus being totally autonomous and self-sufficient.

The U3A developed from modest circumstances in Toulouse, in France, to a global movement encompassing thousands of centres and millions of members (Formosa, 2014). U3As are characterised by a strong self-governing trait that renders efforts to arrive at a reliable and valid definition excruciating. However, U3As can be loosely defined as 'socio-cultural centres where senior citizens may acquire new knowledge of significant issues, or validate the knowledge which they already possess, in an agreeable milieu and in accordance with easy and acceptable methods, with the objective of preserving their vitality and participating in the life of the community' (Midwinter, 1984: 68). As its title postulates, the U3A's target audience are people in the Third Age phase of their life course. Whilst some centres put age 60 and over as a prerequisite for membership, others however adopt a more flexible approach by opening membership to all persons above the age of 50. The U3A movement has not only withstood the test of time but is also marked by an extensive increase of centres and members all over the globe. Although comparative statistics are lacking, Australia included some 300 U3As, with a membership of around the 100,000 mark (U3A Alliance Australia, 2017), whilst its neighbour New Zealand held 84 U3As with the members of the 25 Auckland U3A communities numbering 3719 in 2017 (Findsen, personal communication). Figures for Britain reached over 1000 U3As (400,000 members) in 2018 (U3A, 2018), and a 2013 Interest Group Survey revealed that there are in excess of 36,000 U3A interest groups in the region (Withnall, 2016). Whilst—as expected—walking, history and 'going out' have been listed as the most popular activities, bus restoration, Druidism and unsolved murder mysteries were other unusual subjects on offer (ibid.). In the Asian continent, China alone included 60,867 U3As and around 7,643,100 members in 2015 (Teaching Study Department Guangzhou Elderly University, 2017). At the same time, U3As are also no exception to the e-learning revolution. Initially, the scope of online courses was to reach out to older persons who could not join their peers in a classroom setting such as those living in remote areas and the homebound (Swindell, 2011). However, the coming of the Web 2.0 Internet revolution in union with steep increases in digital competence in later life made virtual U3As—such as U3A Online—increasingly popular with Third Agers (Formosa, 2014).

To dwell on the movement's diverse governing structures, goals and curricular objectives is highly pre-emptive, considering that the rest of the chapters in this book address the unique nuances of U3As in European and Asian-Pacific contexts. However, it is noteworthy to point out, even if briefly, the extensive research lauding the positive impacts of the U3A movement on older persons, and the wider community in general. Although one finds no longitudinal research on the relationship between U3A membership, on the one hand, and improvement in physical and cognitive well-being, on the other, various cross-sectional studies outlined how U3As bring about direct benefits to their members' overall welfare (Maniecka-Bryła, Gajewska, Burzynska, & Byrla, 2013; Niedzielska et al., 2017; Zielinska-Wieczkowska, Ciemnoczołowski, Kedziora-Kornatowska, & Muszali, 2013). An association between participation in U3As and improved levels of self-assurance, self-satisfaction, self-esteem and sense of coherence, on the one hand, and a decline of depressive and anxiety symptoms, on the other, is a frequent result in both survey and ethnographic research (Tomagová, Farský, Bóriková, & Zanovitová, 2016). In the Polish context, researchers concluded that

> Participation in various forms of educational activity broadens one's horizons. Seniors look to broaden their knowledge and circle of interests, drawing from a huge pool of opportunities. They often discover their passions and potential anew. To summarize, the participation of seniors in U3A classes is beneficial for the quality of their lives. U3A classes prevent isolation and result in positive changes of both an individual and social dimension and generates long-term benefits.
>
> (Mackowicz & Wnek-Gozdek, 2016: 196)

U3As are also commended for resolving the tensions arising from the push towards the productive use of one's free time and the pull of 'liberation' or 'well-earned rest' of retirement (Formosa, 2014). Indeed, when members are asked what they gain from their involvement in U3A activities, the first thing that they usually report is not generally related to the learning activities per se but to associated social outcomes such as making new friends and joining support groups (ibid., 2016).

However, the U3A movement has not escaped criticism. A consistent criticism levelled at U3As is that of elitism, as both survey and ethnographic data uncover a compounding class divide amongst membership bodies (Formosa, 2000, 2007, 2010). Although U3As offer no hindrances to admission, membership bodies tend to be exceedingly middle class. Indeed, whilst to middle-class elders joining U3As means going back to an arena in which they feel confident and self-assured of its outcome and development, working-class elders are apprehensive to join an organisation with such a 'heavy'-class baggage in its title. Patterson et al.'s (2016: 1598) qualitative study of a U3A in North-East England uncovered three exclusionary factors which acted as barriers for enrolment and participation—namely 'lack of knowledge about group presence and purpose (both locally and nationally), organisational name and location'. Reflecting other international studies, this study identified this U3A as a middle-class organisation that was mostly frequented by older persons with higher-than-average levels of educational attainment. U3As have also been criticised for including gender biases that work against the interests of both men and women

(Formosa, 2005). On the one hand, U3As tend to be characterised by a 'masculinist' discourse where women are silenced and made passive through their invisibility, an outnumbering of male over female tutors and a perception of older learners as a homogenous population which contributed towards a 'malestream' learning environment. On the other hand, the low percentage of male participants signals strongly that the organisation is not attractive to them. After all, most U3As include study units that generally reflect the interests of a female audience rather than conventional male interest in the physical and natural sciences. Another predicament is that U3As rarely include ethnic minorities in their membership bodies, even in multi-cultural cities such as Sydney and Auckland, nor do they generally cater for older persons experiencing physical and cognitive difficulties. In this respect, Ratana-Ubol and Richards' (2016) study of the U3A movement in Thailand demonstrated that by focusing on returning to learning, as U3As do, the movement overlooks the fact that many older persons outside the Global North (one may add the ethnic minorities in high-income cities) may have never attended any formal education when younger, and thus, may be more interested in basic literacy provision rather than what is generally offered. As they concluded,

> …as the Thailand example illustrates, this concept is sometimes resisted (or may not sufficiently inspire) in non-OECD or at least more traditional societies on the basis of cross-cultural differences as well as views of education directly linked to the tension between tradition and modernity (and associated rural-urban, poor-rich, and technological divides).
>
> (Ratana-Ubol & Richards, 2016: 99)

Due to the consistent emphasis that U3As create the 'conditions under which one becomes a Third Ager, a character in a new stage of life' where 'blanket phrases, which include "the Elderly", "Senior Citizens", "The Retired", and so on, have ceased to be appropriate', it is not surprising that the U3A movement has been 'accused at times of advocating "third Ageist" cultural and lifestyle priorities over economic and political issues, and for glorifying the positivity of the Third Age at the expense of the Fourth Age' (Katz, 2009: 153). Indeed, Wilińska (2012) found that the U3A movement in Poland serves as a vehicle for older persons to resist the negativity of their status and instead assert the meaningfulness of their age in the context of social attitudes to ageing:

> The results of this study indicate that rather than resisting ageist discourses, the U3A simply rejects the idea of old age. The U3A characterizes its members as exceptional people who have nothing in common with old people outside of the U3A. Therefore, the U3A plays only a minor role in changing the social circumstances of old people in Poland …'If you are interested in ageing and older people in Poland, this is not a good place; walk the streets of the city, visit some care centres …'.
>
> (Wilińska, 2012: 290, 294)

The conclusions in Wilińska's (2012) study are reminiscent of Hazan's (1996) ethnography at the Cambridge U3A which elaborated upon the interpersonal discourses and rituals through which members reworked their identities as a kind of 'buffer zone' between midlife and old age:

> …the members of the U3A distinctly referred to themselves as belonging not to the category
> of "old age" but to a category called the "third age". This category is defined as preceding
> "old age", but still as different from it…It was, in the eyes of members, a social buffer
> zone between past upward careers and social integration on one hand, and prospects of
> disengagement and deterioration on the other.
>
> (Hazan, 1996: 33)

For Hazan (1996), the U3A experiment is one that encourages an anti-ageing and death-denying ambiance whereby the agency of members triumphs over the dark side of physical and socio-economic realities so prevalent in later life.

Book Outline

Four parts demarcate the book's chapters. The first part, 'The background context', includes two chapters titled 'Active ageing through lifelong learning: The University of the Third Age' (Marvin Formosa) and 'Origins and development: The Francophone model of Universities of the Third Age' (François Vellas). These chapters set the scene for the book's two subsequent parts by tracing the interface between 'active ageing' and 'lifelong learning in later life', and the origins of the University of the Third Age in Toulouse in 1973.

The book's second part, 'European Perspectives', includes nine chapters. Chapter three, '"An alternative ageing experience": An account and assessment of the University of the Third Age in the United Kingdom' (Keith Percy), illustrates how the U3A in the UK contributes significantly to positive and active ageing, taking older people out of their homes to join peers in physical, cognitive, expressive, imaginative, explorative, altruistic, interactive, creative and social activities. Chapter four, 'Be active through lifelong learning! The University of the Third Age in Iceland' (Hans Kristján Guðmundsson), underlines how the key message directed to the 50-plus generation by the Icelandic U3A movement is that, irrespective of age, it is never too late to rethink one's situation in life, embark on new pastimes, fulfil one's ambitions and act upon one's lifelong dreams and desires. Chapter five, 'The University of the Third Age in Italy: A dynamic, flexible, and accessible learning model' (Barbara Baschiera), discusses the contributions of U3As to lifelong learning for older adults in Italy, with specific reference to its educational, cultural and social impacts. Chapter six, 'Subsisting within public universities: Universities of the Third Age in Germany' (Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha), argues that although the structures which German U3As inhabit may be very specific to the surrounding geographical landscape, the popular didactical concepts reflect and mirror those present in other countries. Chapter seven, 'Third age learning for active ageing in Malta: Successes and limitations' (Marvin Formosa), reports on a multi-method study investigating the impact on Third Age Learning on active ageing, and which found that participation at the U3A impacted active ageing in three key ways—namely health, social inclusion and independence. Chapter eight, 'Late-life learning for social inclusion: Universities of the Third Age in Poland' (Jolanta Maćkowicz & Joanna Wnęk-Gozdek), includes an overview of

ageing-related policy in Poland and its influence on older adult education, as well as the results of a research study on U3As which demonstrated the impact of seniors' participation on their physical, psychological and social well-being. Chapter nine, 'Universities of the Third Age: Learning opportunities in Russia' (Gulnara Minnigaleeva), documents how the role of U3As in Russia has been more that of engaging seniors in active lifestyles, assisting them to socialise with same-aged peers, and maintaining their mental health, rather than educating them for credential qualifications. Chapter ten, 'From university extension classrooms to universities of experience: The University of the Third Age in Spain' (Feliciano Villar), examines the historical, social and conceptual grounds which gave rise to the Spanish U3A movement, whilst highlighting its dual nature whereby a bottom-up model (university classrooms), based on lecture series organised by older people associations, coexists with a more top-down and academic approach (universities of experience), in which universities organise and offer degree-like programmes tailored to older students. The final chapter in the first part, 'Sweden's senior university: *Bildung* and fellowship' (Cecilia Bjursell), provides an overview of the Swedish Senior University movement, noting that there are 34 Senior Universities across the country, and that they are organised as independent associations but linked to the Swedish *Folkuniversitet* system, one of ten educational associations that exist in the Swedish *Folkbildning* organisation.

The book's third part, 'Asian-Pacific Perspectives', includes another nine chapters. Chapter twelve, 'The University of the Third Age movement in Australia: From statewide networking to community engagement' (Ainslee Lamb), describes the movement's origin and organisation in Australia, as well as its membership profile, curriculum approach and ongoing challenges. Chapter thirteen, 'The development and characteristics of Universities of the Third Age in mainland China' (Xinyi Zhao & Ernest Chui), provides an account of the historical development of elder learning in mainland China. It provides the policy framework, curriculum and student profile, teaching and learning strategies and the future challenges facing the U3A's movement in this vast country. Chapter fourteen, 'Third age learning in Hong Kong: The Elder Academy experience' (Maureen Tam), reports on the travails of the opportunities for Third Age Learning in Hong Kong, with special focus on the successes and limitations of Elder Academy network for older adult learning. Chapter fifteen, 'The University of the Third Age in Lebanon: Challenges, opportunities and prospects' (Maya Abi Chahine & Abla M. Sibai), documents the inspiring 'University for Seniors' programme, established in 2010 on the premises of the American University of Beirut, which presently provides adults aged 50-plus with the opportunity to impart knowledge and passions, share their life and professional experiences and remain intellectually energised and socially engaged. Chapter sixteen, 'Moving the needle on the University of the Third Age in Malaysia: Recent developments and prospects' (Tengku Aizan Hamid, Noor Syamilah Zakaria, Nur Aira Abd Rahim, Sen Tyng Chai & Siti Aisyah Nor Akahbar), records how the U3A programme in Malaysia renewed a focus on learning in later life and promoted a model where older persons themselves organise their own learning activities. Chapter seventeen, 'Universities of the Third Age in Aotearoa New Zealand' (Brian Findsen), explores

the development of the U3A movement in Aotearoa, New Zealand, as a prominent initiative in older adult education provision in the wider sociocultural context of this bi-cultural country. Chapter eighteen, 'Third age education and the Senior University movement in South Korea' (Soo-Koung Jun and Karen Evans), outlines the origins, characteristics and structures of the Senior University in Korea and the perspectives that have guided its development. Its objective was to promote active ageing, and in doing so, to prioritise the least-advantaged group of Korean citizens. Chapter nineteen, 'From social welfare to educational gerontology: The Universities of the Third Age in Taiwan' (Shu-Hsin Kuo and Chin-Shan Huang), explains how the U3A movement in Taiwan arose to meet part of the challenges of population ageing in the country as it was thought that providing older adults with educational and learning opportunities will enable them to age actively and successfully. The final chapter in this third part, "Lifelong education' versus 'learning in later life': A University of the Third Age formula for the Thailand context?' (Cameron Richards, Jittra Makaphol and Thomas Kuan), explores the development of an alternative strategy by a traditional university wishing to create a new U3A centre in Thailand, through a local model which overlaps with both the Francophone and Anglophone U3A models, but as a community-based learning group supported by both a traditional university and the municipal resources.

The book's fourth part, 'Coda', which includes one chapter, 'Concluding remarks and reflections' (Marvin Formosa), brings this book to a close by serving as a beacon for further research studies on the U3A movement, whilst also highlighting both its contemporary and future challenges.

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