

COMMENT

Learning the intergenerational way

LIFE LESSONS: It can counter negative stereotypes on generation gap

THERE are issues faced by societies, particularly demographic issues, which require searching for solutions from local and global wisdom.

The key issues in development have yet to be defined comprehensively. In focusing on development, there is the focus on school learning, family learning, organisational learning, mass-media learning and non-formal learning.

Typically, the focus of policymakers would be on the target population, defined as Generations Y or Z, and the youth. At the same time, there is also the focus on the ageing population.

The search for frameworks of inclusive development has led to initiatives such as the designation of 2012 by the European Commission as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

Active growing and the development of talent, and active ageing are considered the keys to harnessing human potentialities in society. While there is the search for a framework for the continuing challenges of development, societies are now confronted by contending, recurring and newly emerging ideologies.

In movie theatres in Malaysia, audiences are warned that various ideological groups have begun re-

cruting online.

The phenomenon of recruiting people online for political and militaristic causes has raised concerns because families and communities are shaken when their closest ones are persuaded to join organisations that are considered illegal.

Schools, universities and the official media have to contend with alternative ideas of development and alternative visions of the future.

Europe has begun to see intergenerational learning (IGL) as one of the important frameworks for solving demographic and learning challenges. In many European nations, institutions and organisations, networks are formed for the promotion of a framework of IGL.



Datuk Dr Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid is deputy vice-chancellor of INTI Laureate International University

Such networks aim to "create support structures for influencing policy through research, dissemination and advocacy for IGL".

The question that has to be answered is, "what is the root problem of human civilisation that drives people to want disruption in society, like deliberately disruptive technology?"

Theories and frameworks that encourage engagement between the generations can create habits of mind in the search for meaning and thinking on what and why people do what they do as they make decisions in the interest of, or against the interest of, society.

To answer this question, the younger and older generations have to engage in the search for common visions and virtues, and intergenerationally acceptable ways of ruling and relationships, with respect and courtesy.

Intergenerational practice (IP) is inclusive, building on the positive



The older and younger generations have resources that are of value to each other.

resources that the younger and older generations have to offer each other and those around them.

IGL is a key issue because the separation between generations leads to negative generational stereotyping, and prevents or decreases positive exchanges between the generations.

However, the separated generations have resources that are of value to each other and can share areas of concern, so they are not marginalised in the decision-making process regarding matters that directly affect their lives.

IGL can enhance the agendas of building active communities, promoting citizenship, regenerating neighbourhoods, addressing inequality and developing potential.

The links between IGL, research and policy are key to the development of IP worldwide and to the integration of IGL into relevant policy areas of development.

IGL can provide a great learning experience for those of all ages via mentoring, guiding and shadowing practices.

IGL creates greater awareness of the issues facing generations, improves interpersonal skills and communication abilities, wellbeing, self-esteem and health for all involved, boosts the development of stronger links with the community, removes age-based stereotypes and, for instance, allows older people to teach the younger generation about the long-term impact of making poor life decisions.

In a knowledge-based and learning society, there is a need to understand the nature of the learning family and IGL behaviour of Baby Boomers, Generation Y children and their Generation X parents in knowledge exchange, and the characteristics of learning behaviour and culture in their "learning families".

The government and education communities should redefine the teaching and learning policy, and practise and promote IGL.

There is a need to draw on the expertise of the East and West through the sharing of insight and experience regarding policies and good practices on active ageing and intergenerational solidarity in families, communities and society.

A reflective platform as a channel for communication for engagement and dialogue among scholars, policymakers and local activists needs to be established to assess the failure of traditional learning methods and contents, in the face of the onslaught of ideas of alternative and learning futures.

Thomas Jefferson wisely observed: "The web of mutual obligations between generations is essential for a civilised society."

iabaiw@yahoo.com