

Proposals for Aging

Abstract

Singapore has amongst the world's most rapidly ageing populations and we expect to see at least 900,000 seniors aged above 65 by 2030. While we are living longer these days – some say with even better quality of life – societies around the globe are having to contend with the issues and challenges that come with ageing populations, that are often further complicated by other societal trends and shifts.

What does ageing and being older look like in the past and now – and how may it look like in the future? How may it be for people from different backgrounds?

And yet, what do these mean for us as individuals – how much does it really matter to us in the present or our future?

For those in our youth, how may this relate to us – or perhaps, not at all – and is there really any reason to care or ponder now about what it means to age or grow old?

Approach

This workshop sets out to invite participants to imagine and participate in conversations on ageing and the aged, so as to promote awareness and also as a means of exploring broader realities, contexts and possibilities in how we relate to others from distanced or differing backgrounds.

By sharing different means of reflecting, inquiring and dialogue in the process, we hope to introduce approaches that encourage both independent and empathic thinking as they come to shape their emerging perspectives in a world of competing values.

Objectives

1. Share with participants selected themes and topics in ageing and the aged to promote awareness.
2. Guide them in identifying & challenging underlying perceptions about ageing.
3. Explore broader, realities, contexts and possibilities in how we relate with those from different backgrounds, such as older persons.
4. Apply and experiment with different ways of reflecting, inquiring and dialogue to promote independent and empathic thinking.

Introductory Modules: Session 1 to 6

1. Introductions

This first session helps both facilitator and students get acquainted and the facilitator will make use of the introductions process to tease out reactions about age and ageing. Beyond the usual aspects of introduction, we ask how old they feel they are, the oldest person they know personally, etc. Students to also take home these introductory questions for conversations with friends, family or neighbours (and take notes) as part of the next session.

2. Faces of Aging

This takes participants through the spectrum of different lenses in which we can view aging, ranging from day-to-day observations to measures of ageing, and to individual and physiological views. The facilitator invokes and invites a breadth of perspectives to allow participants to see the possibilities in which we can connect and relate. Participants then share their experiences and observations from the last 'homework' exercise in conversations. How did the conversations go? What concerns and issues emerged? These will link to the next session where they will explore some key areas more closely.

3. Worlds of Aging

Participants venture into selected domains such as work & retirement, health, identity and relationships. With case studies and scenarios, they are nudged to imagine themselves in those contexts, examining their own responses and positions. Are these influenced by personal experiences of others such as family members; how would those around them respond to the different aspects of aging? From the different domains, they will also pick one to research a relevant initiative in Singapore to present and share next session.

4. Approaches to Aging

Participants share their findings of some of the initiatives in Singapore. What did they uncover – and how do they feel about it? How do they imagine it would be received by others, whether their family or for other groups? How might it compare with approaches in other locales and what are some of the different considerations? The facilitator will show further examples of initiatives that others have taken, presenting a spectrum of possibilities. As they develop their projects, we get them to think more imaginatively what can be done.

5. Futures of Aging

Beyond the different actors and stakeholders involved, there are also other moving parts and forces – trends and developments that could also influence experiences, surprising with opportunities or yet more challenges for the aged and aging. We discuss some of the emerging, interesting and controversial developments that could influence their future experiences in aging.

6. Research/Project Check-In and Sharing

This session provides opportunity for the groups to share their research/project ideas with their other peers, their motivations and how they are following through on their research, as well as any challenges or findings. They can get feedback and ideas from their peers, while also comparing and learning from each other. They may also find areas for collaboration.

Key Topics Covered

(Including but not limited to)

- Work & Retirement
 - Health & Health(care)
 - Identity & Relationships
 - Initiatives Addressing & Relating to Aging
 - Emerging Ideas, Trends & Futures in Aging
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Research/Project Development Phase: Session 7 to 10

While the students focus on developing their projects, we take the opportunity to continue showcase further perspectives or areas in the remaining 4 sessions through a mix of:

Guest Speakers

Depending on availability, we may engage practitioners in the social/care/health/arts sectors, as well as our network of seniors, who can share their perspectives with the students and in the course help inform their own projects and research.

Special Topics

We venture further into some aspects that may be touched on during the introductory modules, that may be more complex or challenging to engage. The purpose is to provide further exposure and develop awareness of these areas. Possible topics include, but not limited to:

- Dignity & Aging
 - Palliative & End-of-Life Care
 - Arts, Health & Aging
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Beyond the Classroom

Besides some of the take-home research and exercises such as conversations with those around them, we hope to also engage them through field trips outside of the classroom sessions to further broaden and inform their perspectives. The Senior-Guided Sessions with The Folklore Archives, for instance, allows them to explore realities of seniors and aging in a different setting beyond their own circles, the classroom and desktop research.