

Later-Life Learning: LEXICON of TERMS

Preface

This Lexicon of 110 English language terms from the field of later-life learning is a one product of the international project *ForAge for later-life learning: building on European experience* (2012-2015) funded in the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union (see <http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/>).

The Lexicon contains definitions of terms and, in many cases, comments on their usage in discussions of later-life learning. It has been compiled by the Association for Education and Ageing (AEA), UK, one of the partners in the ForAge project. It has been through several drafts, each time growing in size. Each draft has been subject to comment by representatives of Project partners in 14 countries and other colleagues. Thus, although focusing on the English language, the Lexicon has been subjected to international and collective scrutiny.

The ForAge Project has been concerned with collecting together knowledge, ideas and experience about later- life learning in Europe and with making them available, in accessible formats, to different European audiences including policy-makers, researchers and practitioners. Through seeking to do so, however, important factors became clear. The boundaries of the field of later-life learning are both indistinct and contested. The language of later-life learning (at least, in English) can be ill-defined and inexact; sometimes its usage is unclear and confusing.

The case for the Project to construct a Lexicon was, therefore strong. The 110 terms have been chosen because, in a sense, they provide the parameters within which the Project believes that later-life learning is currently examined, discussed and debated. Of course, many of the

terms belong also to other stages and phases of lifelong learning. The definitions used in this Lexicon, however, have been adapted and refined to fit with their relevance to later-life learning. 43 of the 110 definitions have been taken from other published lexicons, glossaries and lists. The remainder have been devised by the Project. Many of these are stipulative definitions - that is to say, they propose boundaries and meanings for terms which have been used diffusely and/or lack clear meaning.

This Lexicon is not designed to monopolise or limit later-life learning in the future. Later-life learning is, hopefully, a field of knowledge, experience and practice whose time has yet to come. Its terminology, therefore, should expand and change and this Lexicon should be dynamic. The AEA intends to review and to revise it from time to time. Moreover, a Lexicon like this should stimulate debate. Surely not all of the definitions and comments which it contains are acceptable. Hopefully some of them are contentious. The Association for Education and Ageing and their ForAge colleagues will be pleased if the contents of the Lexicon stimulate debates or raise questions in the field of later-life learning. Equally they will be glad to receive comments or suggestions for improvement. Debates can conveniently be held in the interactive ForAge Forum section of the ForAge Project website (<http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/forum/>). Comments can be made on the Facebook sites of both the ForAge Project (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/ForAge-for-later-life-learning-building-on-European-experience/447577198673523?fref=ts>) and the Association for Education and Ageing (<https://www.facebook.com/EducationandAgeing?fref=ts>). They can also be sent to k.percy@hotmail.com

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Number	TERM	DEFINITION	Source of definition
1	Access	Conditions, circumstances, costs and requirements governing admittance to education and training institutions or programmes	NRDC (adapted)
2	Accredited Learning	Learning which leads to a recognised qualification	NRDC
3	Active Ageing	The process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age. More extensive definitions include independence in activities, social contribution, emotional connections, supporting people to adapt to age-related limitations, resilience, creative leisure, sexuality, retaining own values and removing structural barriers to participation	WHO CINAGE
4	Activity	Creative 'activity', sporting 'activity' and learning 'activity' are frequently discussed in learning in later life literature as contributing to the health and wellbeing of older people.	ForAge
5	Adult	Any person aged 16 years or older who has left the initial education and training system. (16 is age of majority in some EU countries. International surveys of adult literacy & numeracy tend to start at age 16).	NRDC
6	Adult education	General or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training for professional and/or personal purposes.	Cedefop
7	Adult learning	The entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities which are undertaken by adults after a break since leaving initial education and training and which results in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.	NRDC

8	Age-friendly cities	Part of a WHO initiative to encourage active ageing by ensuring that city-wide agencies co-operate to take account of the health, participation and security of older people resident locally.	WHO (adapted)
9	Ageing	The process of growing old. A lifelong process, going on from cradle to grave (N. American 'aging').	ForAge
10	Ageism	Prejudice and discrimination against a particular age group.	ForAge
11	Ageing population	An ageing population is one in which the median age is increasing. This phenomenon occurs when there is rising life expectancy and/or declining birth rate of a country or region. Population ageing is most advanced in the most highly developed countries. However, it has now slowed considerably in Europe and will have the greatest future impact in Asia.	ForAge
12	Andragogy	The art and science of helping adults learn. Andragogy acknowledges and builds on the independence of adults, their experience and their desire to exert control over what and how they learn.	LARA (adapted)
13	Aspiration	Eager desire, hope, ambition, aim. Important that discourse on later-life learning does not begin from the assumption that older people do not have educational aspirations.	ForAge
14	Attitudes to ageing	The attitudes of older people and of others to age and ageing. Positive and negative views of ageing, learning, education and status can contribute to the attitudes and beliefs of older people about themselves, their roles and rights and the responsibilities of others.	Mature (adapted)
15	Autonomy	Self-governing, self-directing, independent. Often regarded as a key overarching goal in education and learning for older people	ForAge
16	Barriers to learning	Situational (day to day life), institutional (rules and procedures), dispositional (attitudes to learning) and/or financial factors which impede, dissuade from or prevent engagement in learning activities	NRDC
17	Basic skills	The skills needed to live in contemporary society, e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing, mathematics and ICT.	Cedefop

18	Brainstorming	A spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness, workshop-based facilitation technique to generate lists of ideas or solutions. Sometimes used with older people as a way of stimulating learning & creative thinking	ForAge
19	Community-based adult learning	Learning taking place in local communities, delivered by educational providers in collaboration with adults	NRDC (adapted)
20	Compensatory education	At school level often used to describe help for marginalised groups to overcome educational and social disadvantage. The notion of compensatory learning is relevant to later-life learning when older people are in a position to learn what they once wanted to learn, but were not able to.	ForAge
21	Competence	Specific skills and abilities that underpin successful ageing and that enable the individual to maintain independence and active participation in life.	LARA
22	Creativity in learning	To do something new; to produce something out of the imagination; to try something out; to design something. Some argue that many older people have the motivation, time and space to be creative in learning. Certainly activities such as creative arts and creative writing are popular.	ForAge
23	Critical gerontology	Focuses on the ideological and socially constructed features of how age is perceived. Argues that the nature of scientific data on ageing cannot be separated from the approach and interests of researchers.	ForAge
24	Cultural capital	Knowledge, language, attitudes, values and lifestyle which give those in the middle and upper classes an inbuilt advantage in the education system. A factor influencing participation in later-life learning.	ForAge
25	Culture	The cumulative knowledge, experience, beliefs and values of individuals or a group of people. Older migrants, older members of minority ethnic communities, older members of faith groups may, for example, be among those who experience cultural barriers to participation in learning and in the wider communities in which they live. There may also be generational cultural barriers.	Mature

26	Dementia	A chronic disorder of the mental processes caused by brain disease or injury and marked by memory disorders, personality changes, and impaired reasoning.	ForAge
27	'Demographic time bomb'	The view that the growing proportion of older people in the population (see "dependency ratio") will soon present policy makers with a hitherto unheard-of challenge for the working age population, which will face the "burdens" of pensions and care costs.	ForAge
28	Demography	The study of human populations, using statistics to examine such aspects as the size, growth, structure and distribution of groups of people. Demographic analysis can be applied to a particular population group, such as men and women aged over 65, and can take account of changes across geographical space and across time, in relation to dimensions such as birth, death, migration, and ageing.	ForAge
29	Dependency ratio	A measure showing the number of "dependents" (aged 0-14 and over the age of 65) to the total working age population (aged 15-64) in a society. The "old age dependency ratio" is predicted to increase as life expectancy increases	ForAge
30	Differentiation	Teacher approaches to group learning which cater for individual needs and expectations e.g. providing a range of resources and tasks; time management; and group management techniques.	LARA (adapted)
31	Digital divide / Digital gap	The gap between those who can access and use information and communication technologies (ICT) effectively and those who cannot.	Cedefop
32	Digital literacy	Possession of skills in the use of information and communication technologies.	ForAge
33	Digital "natives"	Those who have grown up with the new information and communication technologies and possess mastery of them - unlike many older people.	ForAge
34	Disability	A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and/or long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.	ForAge
35	Disadvantaged	Excluded from social rights or from social life or whose situation is precarious.	Cedefop

36	Distance learning	Education and training imparted at a distance through communication media: books, radio, TV, telephone, correspondence, computer or video.	Cedefop
37	Educational environment	Environment where the education and learning takes place – this can be much wider than schools and other places of formal learning, e.g. community centres, care homes, cultural centres, universities, municipalities, etc. According to some theorists, almost any environment can be “educational”.	ForAge
38	Educational gerontology	Includes the theory, study and practice of education for older people, education about ageing and the education of professionals and para-professionals in, for example, adult education, health and social care.	ForAge
39	e-learning/e-skills	Learning supported by information and communication technologies (ICT). May encompass multiple formats and hybrid methods: using software, Internet, CD-ROM, online learning or other electronic or interactive media.	Cedefop
40	Empowerment	Empowerment encourages older people to draw on and learn to extend their own capacities to make effective choices in life and to exercise autonomy and decision-making power in relation to their lives and their social environment (see “autonomy”).	CINAGE (adapted)
41	Engagement	Actions taken to find (older) people who do not participate in (learning) groups; the ways in which connections are made between learning providers and such older people and the factors which encourage participation.	Mature (adapted)
42	Equality of educational opportunity	The principle that every person, regardless of age, social class, ethnic background or disability, should have equal access to educational provision and progression.	ForAge
43	Experience-based learning	The exploitation of experience to initiate, create and deliver learning. Based on the belief that adults, especially older adults, accumulate a body of skills knowledge and understanding through a lifetime of experiences.	LARA (adapted)

44	Experiential learning	Learning through experience, whether through 'life' or through classroom experiences, e.g. simulation games.	ForAge
45	Facilitation	Approach to teaching challenging the didactic model; elicits rather than imposes learning. The teacher, almost on a par with learners, acts as a catalyst for the sharing of experience. Thought to be appropriate to older adults.	LARA (adapted)
46	Feedback	In educational situations this usually refers to information received from students on the quality of their learning experience and opinions on means of improvement. In later-life learning, securing feedback from older learners is often regarded as fundamental.	ForAge
47	Financial literacy/competence	The ability of individuals to use knowledge and skills to manage their finances and make financial decisions effectively. Financial skills may be particularly required in mid to later life in relation to access to, and understanding of, financial services, pensions and retirement planning and to cope with sudden changes in financial circumstances.	ForAge
48	Finitude	Awareness of, reflection on and preparation for, end-of-life.	ForAge
49	Formal learning	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification.	Cedefop
50	Fourth Age	A term used loosely to refer to the period of life between the 'Third Age (q.v.) and death. Usually characterised as relating to the very old who are no longer active and need care and support. Rarely used in association with those under 80 years.	ForAge
51	Functional literacy	The ability to read and write at a level of competence that enables full participation in social and economic life.	NRDC
52	Functional numeracy	The ability to use numbers and other mathematical concepts at a level of competence that enables full participation in social and economic life.	NRDC

53	Geragogy	Theory, practice and research relating to the teaching of older people.	ForAge
54	Gerontology	The study of old age and the process of becoming old. Can be coupled with qualifiers such as 'Educational' or 'Social'.	ForAge
55	'Grey pound'	The economic power of older people as a group in society.	ForAge
56	Hard to engage	Persons difficult to attract into formal or non-formal learning and/or not suited by educational provision.	NRDC
57	Healthy ageing	The optimisation of opportunities for good health in later life <i>"so that older people can take an active part in society and enjoy an independent and high quality of life"</i> .	EHN
58	Higher education	Education at university level; education at ISCED level 5 or above.	NRDC
59	ICT skills	The skills needed for efficient use of information and communication technologies.	Cedefop
60	Informal Learning	Learning resulting from everyday activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not normally organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective	Cedefop (adapted)
61	Information, advice and guidance (IAG)	A range of activities designed to help individuals to reflect upon and take educational, vocational or personal decisions .The term is passing out of use currently - for example, career advice professionals now tend to prefer the term "career education".	Cedefop (adapted)
62	Intergenerational learning	People of different generations studying together and/or teaching, and learning from, each other. Generations working together to gain skills, values and knowledge.	ForAge
63	Later-life	The period of life normally described as following retirement (q.v.) and/or beginning at a certain age in the chronological period 50 – 65 years .Later life can also encompass older workers, this status starting in some countries at the age of 40+ (see "older person", "older worker", "Third Age", "Fourth Age").	ForAge

64	Later-life learning	All aspects of formal, non-formal and informal learning undertaken by, and relevant to, older people.	ForAge
65	Learning by doing	Acquiring knowledge of, and skills in, an area by working or being active in the area. Action learning. Said by some to be a way of learning particularly suited to older people. (See “experience-based learning”; “work-based-learning”).	ForAge
66	Learning difficulties and disabilities	Cognitive and/or physical impairments which are barriers to learning at any age.	NRDC (adapted)
67	Liberal adult education	Liberal non-formal and voluntary adult educational for all ages which is undertaken for its own sake and not for vocational reasons.	ForAge team
68	Life course	The sequence of socially and culturally defined events and roles through which the individual lives over time. The connections between the individual and the historical/socioeconomic contexts in which s/he lived are central.	ForAge
69	Lifelong learning	All learning activity undertaken throughout life which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social or professional reasons.	Cedefop
70	Life stages	The conceptualisation of life as passing through different stages. It may differ in different cultures but usually includes some variation of Birth, Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood, Old Age and Death. As life expectancy increases, some differentiation of Old Age is taking place (see “Third Age”, “Fourth Age”).	ForAge
71	Life-wide learning	Learning (formal, non-formal or informal) which takes place across the full range of life activities (personal, social or professional) and at any stage of life.	Cedefop
72	Literacy	Capabilities of a person in reading and writing .Term has acquired wider use, particularly in connection with adults – for example – cultural literacy, practical literacy (see also “digital literacy”, “financial literacy” and “functional literacy”).	ForAge

73	Meaning in life	Make sense of life; finding meaning in an individual life, normally one's own. Reflection on meaning in life can be regarded as an aspect of positive ageing.	ForAge
74	Memory problems	There are powerful cultural beliefs that memory deteriorates significantly in later life and, therefore, older people have more difficulty in learning. While there are physical changes, there is strong evidence that positive attitudes and mnemonic techniques can more than compensate for any physical change.	ForAge
75	Mnemonic techniques	A range of devices, approaches ,routines, habits, aids and techniques, often based on scientific knowledge, which assist memory.	ForAge
76	Motivation to learn	Absence of motivation to learn among older people on grounds of age and lack of self-confidence is often regarded as a key issue.	ForAge
77	Mutual learning	Learning from each other and from the whole learning group. Often regarded as a preferred form of learning for older people.	ForAge
78	Non-formal learning	Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.	Cedefop
79	Normal ageing	In some countries political and social policy development is based on the notion of ageing as 'pathological' rather than 'normal'. Older people are considered often as potential patients in need of medical or institutional care than as normal people who happen to be older.	ForAge
80	Older learner	For policy and statistical purposes, older learners are frequently defined as those aged 50+, who are involved in all forms of learning - formal, non-formal or informal.	ForAge
81	Older person	Views vary on the chronological age at which a person may be defined as "older". The ages of 50 or 55 years are often mentioned as the starting point of "older age" but will often vary between countries depending on pensions or retirement age. It is likely that in the future the chronological definition of "older" will shift upwards.	ForAge

82	Older worker	People aged 50+, who are in employment or seeking employment, are frequently defined as older workers.	ForAge
83	Open learning	System of learning which opens possibilities to all persons without limits – open university, open learning systems, open learning centres, etc. It is important that educational policies ensure that the “openness” is inclusive of older people.	ForAge
84	Participation rate	Adult participation in lifelong learning, i.e. the percentage of the adult population participating in education and training (EU Labour Force Survey benchmark is those aged 25-64 years).	LFS
85	Peer Learning	Learning between equals – which might be defined variously as people of the same age, same educational background, same interests etc. (see “mutual learning”).	ForAge
86	Positive ageing	Taking a positive attitude to ageing, feeling good about oneself as an older person, continuing to engage fully in life and consciously facing up to the challenges it can bring.	ForAge
87	Policy	A statement of intent, procedures and outcomes intended to guide decisions and actions. National, regional and local governments often lack policies relating to learning of older people.	ForAge
88	Pre-retirement education	Courses/programmes of varied content aiming to prepare older workers for life after end of paid employment (see “retirement”)	ForAge
89	Productive ageing	The term is used when older people produce goods or services, or develop the capacity to produce them. There is dispute about the definition of such “goods or services”.	ForAge
90	Progression	What adult (including older adult) learners do next, normally at a higher level, in terms of study, employment or civic activity.	NRDC (adapted)
91	Quality of life	The standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or group (see “wellbeing”).	ForAge
92	Reminiscence	Structured recall and sharing of memories, particularly by older people, and often with others. Held to contribute to health and wellbeing and to assist in the achievement of a sense of completeness and resolution.	ForAge

93	Re-socialisation	The process of learning new attitudes and norms required for a new social role. For older people and retirees this may mean learning how to integrate into new social groups (including educational groups such as U3A) after working life.	ForAge
94	Retirement	The point at which an individual leaves paid employment. However, the notion of absolute retirement is becoming increasingly challenged in the 21 st century as different patterns of exit from paid employment and of part-time employment for older people emerge.	ForAge
95	Self-directed learning	Learning by oneself without the aid of an instructor. May be particularly relevant to those with limited mobility.	Cedefop
96	Silver economy	The industry/sector focusing on providing older people, particularly those with disposable income, with products and services. Older people as drivers of economic growth, creating new markets for, e.g., technology services for wellbeing and health monitoring, health sports and tourism. Educational implications relate to older people learning to define needs for new products and services and to assess those offered by the market.	ForAge
97	Skill	The ability to perform tasks and solve problems. Skills can be learned at any stage of adult life.	Cedefop
98	Social exclusion	Exclusion from the rights, benefits and privileges of society, typically as a result of poverty or belonging to a minority social group. The provision of education and learning in later life is often claimed to have a duty of promoting social inclusion for all older people.	ForAge
99	Social media	Social media are the online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. There are websites/ applications dedicated to forums , microblogging , (e.g. twitter); social networking (e.g. Facebook), wikis , social bookmarking and social curation (content sharing and evaluation). These are developing phenomena in which older people, for various reasons, are less likely to participate.	ForAge

100	Spiritual learning	Learning about self in relation to others, the world and a higher purpose or power. Concerned with personal development, human potential and 'ultimate meaning'. Regarded by some as a particular feature of later life.	ForAge
101	Stereotyping	Characterising members of a social group (such as older people) with the same attributes – normally negative.	ForAge
102	Third Age	Normally taken to refer to the earlier part of older age, often post-retirement, and characterised by activity, involvement and reasonable health. The term "third age" is said by some to be falling out of usage and is being replaced by "The time between work, retirement and old age".	Unesco (adapted)
103	Third sector	The sector encompasses voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, and cooperatives, churches, non-governmental organisations as well as networks. Such organisations are self-governing and constitutionally independent of the State and do not distribute profits to shareholders.	TSEP (adapted)
104	Transformative Learning	Learning that occurs when students experience a <i>perspective transformation</i> and begin to see the world in a new way, re-evaluating their own assumptions, beliefs and behaviours in the light of new experiences. Regarded by some as particularly relevant to later life.	ForAge
105	Transitions	The passage between one chapter of an adult's life and another. Examples: from working life to retirement; from family member to single status.	LARA (adapted)
106	University of the Third Age; University for Third Age; Third Age University; U3A.	There are several variants of the University of the Third Age (U3A) making educational provision for older people. In continental Europe and worldwide, U3A is related integrally to a local university. In the UK variant, U3As are self-help voluntary organisations engaged in non-vocational learning. Another variant (e.g. the Slovenian Third Age University) is a non-governmental organisation run by university	ForAge

		teachers, providing education for and about older people, for personal growth, local development, research and guidance in relation to paid, unpaid or voluntary work.	
107	Voluntarism	Voluntary (non-governmental) provision of services to religious, civil, medical, educational, environmental and other sectors. Much provision of services to older people takes place in the voluntary sector.	ForAge
108	Wellbeing	How people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.	NEF
109	Wisdom	Pragmatic intelligence. The capacity to be wise, rational and to make balanced judgements. Sometimes associated with later life and the knowledge and experience it may bring as in the “wisdom of the elders”.	ForAge
110	Work-based learning	Learning taking place through carrying out and reflecting on work tasks in a real environment.	Cedefop

Key to Sources

[43 of the terms in the Lexicon are derived from sources other than AEA and the ForAge Project. The sources are referenced below. Four of them (Cedefop, CINAGE, NRDC, Mature) have the term, or the term and definition, translated into other European languages. The number of other languages available in the original source is indicated in square brackets at the end of the reference]

- Cedefop: Terminology of European education and training policy: 100 Key Terms. Luxembourg: Cedefop (2008).
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4064>
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- CINAGE: European Cinema for Active Ageing Grundtvig Project.
<http://cinageproject.eu/en/package/research/glossary.html#g22>
*[4]
- EHN: EuroHealthNet
<http://www.healthyageing.eu/>
- ForAge Team: Forage: Building on European Experience. Grundtvig Project
<http://www.foragenetwork.eu/en/>
- NRDC: European Adult Learning Glossary, Level 1. (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Institute of Education, University of London), London (2008).
http://www.pedz.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-b/gdbk/10/adultglossary1_en.pdf
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- LARA: Learning - a Response to Ageing. Grundtvig Project.
<http://www.laraproject.net/glossary.html>
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<http://matureproject.eu/glossary>
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- NEF: New Economic Foundation *Measuring Wellbeing: a guide for practitioners*, London (2012).
<http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/measuring-well-being>
- TSEP: Third Sector European Policy network.
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/TSEP/>
- UK Office: UK Office for the Third Sector.
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector.aspx
- UNESCO: Glossary of Adult Learning in Europe. UNESCO - Institute for Education, Hamburg, (1999).
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