

# Intergenerational Learning: A New Approach to Overcoming Participation Barriers in Education Among Older Adults: Based on the Perspective of “the Elderly and the Young”

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## Abstract

Based on an analysis of 734 samples from Hangzhou, it is found that older adults face numerous barriers to participation in education, including institutional barriers, situational barriers, intention barriers, and information barriers. The intergenerational gap in grandparent-grandchild caregiving is a significant factor affecting participation in education. As a new perspective for older adult education, intergenerational learning can break the traditional thinking of intergenerational caregiving, promote innovation in older adult education, explore new elderly care models, and achieve collaborative learning, mutual benefit, and lifelong learning. This paper explores the design concepts and practical models of intergenerational learning and, based on the perspective of “the Elderly and the Young”, actively addresses participation barriers in fields, such as concept reshaping, mechanism integration, resource provision, and institutional support. This is done to provide a reference for the construction and development of intergenerational

learning models in China and respond to the new demands of active aging in the new era.

**Key words:** Intergenerational learning; Older adult education; Participation barriers; the Elderly and the Young

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China has entered a rapid aging process. The seventh census data in 2020 shows that China’s population aged 60 and above exceeds 260 million, with those aged 60 to 69 accounting for 55.83% of the elderly population (National Bureau of Statistics of the People’s Republic of China, 2020). During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, China’s elderly population will increase by more than 57 million, totaling over 300 million. With the deepening development of China’s aging cause, the national “14th Five-Year Plan” has elevated the concept of “active aging” to the national strategic level, supporting older adults in learning and contributing to society. However, scholars have conducted research on the elderly community in cities such as Shanghai and Ningbo using quantitative and qualitative research methods, finding that the current elderly population still faces many participation barriers in education. These barriers can be attributed to internal factors such as physical and psychological barriers and situational barriers, and external factors such as institutional barriers and information barriers (Tao & Fu, 2019). Additionally, they can be classified by type as erroneous learning, learning defense, and resistance to learning (Li & Ma, 2019). The reasons for these barriers are not only the psychological and physical issues of the elderly but also the influence of external factors such as

society, educational institutions, and educators (Zhang, 2013). Scholars have been committed to using educational interventions to alleviate population aging, improve intergenerational relationships, and promote lifelong learning. Intergenerational learning, as a new learning method integrating formal and informal approaches (Cortellesi & Kernan, 2016), is gradually being applied in family, work, and community learning scenarios. Therefore, this paper takes intergenerational learning as a new perspective for older adult education, with urban older adults who participate and do not participate in education as the research subjects. By analyzing and clarifying the influencing factors and issues of barriers to participation in education among the elderly, this paper studies the design concepts and practical models of intergenerational learning. This approach can not only eliminate the barriers to older adult participation in education but also promote active aging, and it is also an important way for education administrators and practitioners to carry out reforms.

## 1. PARTICIPATION BARRIERS FOR OLDER ADULT EDUCATION AND THEORETICAL REFERENCE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

### 1.1 Active Aging and Elderly Education

The World Health Organization (WHO) first proposed the concept of “active aging” in its 2002 report “Active Aging: Policy Framework,” and listed “health, participation, and security” as its three pillars. Some scholars have used these three pillars to evaluate learning outcomes, finding that older learners have achieved active aging to some extent, but the level of realization varies (Huang & Ouyang, 2020). Other scholars believe that without corresponding elderly education, participation in aging is impossible to achieve; “participation” is the core of active aging, and the development of elderly education is the main way for “participation” (He & Sun, 2017); The aging population exposes issues with the elderly population, the majority of which are engaged in housework and childcare, with a high focus on health and security, but often struggle to participate in education. The perspective of elderly education has hit the nail on the head of the issue, and as basic living needs are met, the elderly population has higher requirements for self-motivation and a greater demand for realizing self-worth (Xia, 2016). Under the perspective of active aging, elderly education also needs to be repositioned, making new strategic choices and expanding towards “participation, health, and security” (Li & Zhou, 2011). Therefore, elderly education, with its flexibility, participation, and low cost, is suitable for the learning participation of older adults, and the development of elderly education is an

effective way to solve problems such as population aging and delayed retirement.

### 1.2 Participation Barriers in Elderly Education

At present, in the field of adult education, there is no unified conclusion on the definition of “participation barriers.” Researchers often focus on learning participation barriers, learning barriers, and participation barriers in education, with the latter being more commonly used. American scholar K.P. Cross was one of the earliest researchers on participation barriers in education and, based on American survey data, categorized them into situational barriers, institutional barriers, and intention barriers (Cross, 1981). Domestic scholars have further identified intention barriers, information barriers, physiological barriers, situational barriers, and institutional barriers as the main factors affecting the participation of older adults in education. Time constraints, physical inconvenience, transportation, and cost issues are the main components of situational barriers, while lack of interest in course content is the main factor of institutional barriers (Mao, 2018; Sun, Wang, & Sun, 2016). Foreign scholars have found through comparing over 500 older adults that those participating in educational activities seem to be more troubled by situational barriers, while non-participants are more affected by intention and institutional barriers, including lack of transportation and physical functional barriers (Tam & Chui, 2016). In general, situational and psychological barriers in elderly participation in education, as well as social and cultural factors and family environment, have a greater inhibitory effect on older adults’ participation in education.

### 1.3 Intergenerational Learning and Elderly Participation in Education

Developed countries, which entered the aging stage earlier, have basically formed typical development models for elderly education, such as “France—University of the Third Age, the United States—Community Elderly Education, the United Kingdom—Distance Elderly Education, and Japan—Social Elderly Education.” To address the challenges such as rapid development of aging, the increasing demand for elderly care services, generational gaps and conflicts, research on intergenerational learning began in the 1980s in foreign countries. The earliest fields involved were psychology and medicine, which later gradually penetrated into education (Ming & Xu, 20218). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1999) proposed that intergenerational learning is the process of purposefully and consistently exchanging learning resources between the older and younger generations. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also pointed out that intergenerational learning, as a form of lifelong learning, can promote active aging among

older adults. Some European countries, such as Spain, the United Kingdom, and Germany, have been working hard to promote community intergenerational learning, closely linking it with community culture, which helps to develop community awareness and social capital among residents of different generations. This has essentially formed three major models centered on “family—school—enterprise—community,” including family intergenerational learning based on “clan relationships,” school and enterprise intergenerational learning based on “teaching relationships,” and social intergenerational learning based on “history and culture” (Liu & Chen, 2018). Overall, intergenerational learning has gradually received widespread attention from researchers and practitioners in various countries. Intergenerational learning is of great significance in alleviating generational conflicts, narrowing generational gaps, and deepening communication and understanding between different generations. It plays a key role in eliminating participation barriers in elderly education, and foreign-related research has made phased progress. However, support services and practical evaluation of intergenerational learning are still lacking. Therefore, constructing a scientific and specific model and content of intergenerational learning remains a daunting task.

In summary, through the review of literature, it can be seen that domestic and foreign research on participation barriers in older adult education mainly focuses on the participating population, with a lack of specialized research on the non-participating population. The research subjects of this project include three types of older adults: those who have not participated in education, those who have participated and subsequently dropped out, and those who are actively participating in education. By analyzing and summarizing the current situation and problems of participation barriers in older adult education, a new perspective based on “the Elderly and the Young” intergenerational learning is proposed. Strengthening research on intergenerational learning to overcome participation barriers can alleviate the conflicts and challenges brought about by elderly care and child care.

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## **2. PRACTICAL BARRIERS TO OLDER ADULT PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION - BASED ON A SAMPLE ANALYSIS IN HANGZHOU**

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### **2.1 Survey Design and Data Analysis**

#### **2.1.1 Research Subjects**

This study mainly adopts a questionnaire-based empirical research method. It draws on existing research results, including the learning characteristics of older adults, learning theories, and learning barrier theories, to provide constructive references for the reliability and validity of the

questionnaire survey design. With the support of Hangzhou Retired Cadre Center, questionnaires were distributed in some communities in Gongshu District, Shangcheng District, and Qiantang District of Hangzhou, with older adults aged 55 and above as the research subjects.

#### **2.1.2 Research Design and Method**

A questionnaire on “Survey on Participation Barriers in Education for Older Adults in Urban Community” was developed. The questionnaire was distributed and collected in both paper and online forms from late November 2022 to mid-January 2023. A total of 760 questionnaires were distributed, and 734 valid questionnaires were collected, with a response rate of 96.57%.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts. The first part is an introduction to the basic information of the respondents, with nine questions covering gender, age, education, income, occupation, and other basic information. The second part is the current status and attitude of older adult participation in education, with 13 questions including knowledge of older adult education, willingness to participate, education costs, and learning content needs, etc. The third part is the factor analysis of participation barriers in older adult education. Based on K.P. Cross’s classification of participation barriers, information barriers are added, including institutional barriers, situational barriers, intention barriers, and information barriers, with a total of 21 questions and 4-6 questions for each barrier. The fourth part is a subjective question soliciting opinions and suggestions on older adult education support services. In addition, to further understand the attitudes and ideas of urban community older adults towards participation barriers in education, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a random sample of older adults. The interview outline includes questions such as: What do you think is the significance of participating in older adult education? What are your feelings about community-organized older adult education activities? Do your family members support your participation in community older adult education activities? What do you think needs to be improved in terms of learning content, course content, and teaching methods in older adult education? What is the biggest barrier to participating in older adult education? Are you willing to participate in intergenerational learning activities organized by the community?

### **2.2 Questionnaire Results and Analysis**

#### **2.2.1 Educational Background Characteristics and Participation Needs of Older Adults**

As can be seen from Table 1, the surveyed older adults in Hangzhou communities generally have a higher level of education, with 33.51% holding a junior college diploma, 21.25% holding a bachelor’s degree, 156 people holding a bachelor’s degree, and 14 people holding a graduate degree or above, accounting for 1.91%. As a result,

the respondents have a relatively high-income level, with 62.81% earning more than 4,000 yuan per month, including 12.12% earning more than 7,000 yuan.

**Table 1**  
**Basic Information of Respondents**

		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	139	18.94%
	Female	595	81.06%
Age	50-60	214	29.16%
	60-70	397	54.09%
	70-80	122	16.62%
	Over 80	1	0.14%
	Junior high school and below	89	12.13%
Education	High school (technical secondary school)	229	31.20%
	Junior college	246	33.51%
	Bachelor's degree	156	21.25%
	Graduate degree and above	14	1.91%
Income	Below 4000 yuan	273	37.19%
	4000-5000 yuan	110	14.99%
	5000-6000 yuan	165	22.48%
	6000-7000 yuan	97	13.22%
	Above 7000 yuan	89	12.12%
Living Situation	Living alone	46	6.27%
	Living with spouse	441	60.08%
	Living with spouse and children	226	30.79%
	Others	21	2.86%

From Figure 1, it can be seen that older adults in Hangzhou communities have a strong desire to participate in education, with 91.55% believing that education can enrich their later years and make life more meaningful; 65.53% of older adults believe that participating in education can satisfy personal interests, 54.63% believe that it can help them make new friends, 32.7% believe that education can better integrate them into the community and participate in volunteer services, and 21.12% believe that participating in education can narrow the gap with the younger generation, strengthen intergenerational learning, bridge the intergenerational gap, and promote intergenerational integration.

In terms of leisure time activities for older adults in Hangzhou communities, 71.12% engage in physical exercise to stay fit, and half of them participate in activities to expand their knowledge and social circle, including 54.22% who read books and newspapers, 61.31% who watch television and listen to radio broadcasts, and 53.43% who attend social gatherings with friends. Overall, older adults in Hangzhou communities place a greater emphasis on personal health and family affairs, and 26.43% participate in various learning classes to increase their knowledge and skills. Older

adults in Hangzhou communities prefer courses related to “health and wellness,” “practical skills for living,” and “chess, calligraphy,” while they are increasingly interested in more specialized course content such as “investment and financial management” and “foreign language learning.” On the one hand, this preference aligns with their own physical and psychological states and interests; on the other hand, it also indicates that older adults place greater importance on physical exercise and healthy leisure activities, and they are less interested in or resistant to learning content that requires higher skills and professional knowledge.

### 2.3 A Glimpse into the Participation Barriers in Education for Older Adults

The fourth part of the questionnaire targets different reactions on the participation barriers in education for older adults, as shown in Table 2. Institutional barriers include education environment, teaching arrangements, curriculum, and teacher quality, which significantly hinder older adults’ participation in education and are the main aspects that communities or universities for the elderly can improve. Situational barriers refer to obstacles that occur during specific periods, where other activities or responsibilities, such as taking care of grandchildren, doing housework, lack of family support, and payment of fees for learning, prevent participation in education due to scheduling conflicts. Psychological barriers are manifestations of personal attitudes and psychological experiences, such as concerns about age, lack of patience, and energy, forming internal obstacles that play a decisive role in participation barriers. Information barriers mainly refer to the fear of new technology, mismatched course content, and inability to use computers, which are educational changes brought about by the digital transformation in the new era. For older adults, information barriers also pose technical hurdles that hinder participation in education.

As can be seen from Table 2, institutional barriers, situational barriers, and intention barriers have a higher total number of votes and proportions, and they are considered the main aspects of participation barriers in education for older adults.

Regarding institutional barriers, “the class location is too far, transportation is inconvenient” is the most significant barrier, accounting for 56.13%, and “class schedule conflicts with personal daily routine” also reaches 45.10%, indicating that older adults’ requirements for class time and location are crucial factors. During the interviews, it was also discovered that transportation hindered participation in education for older adults. They generally do not drive cars and rely on public transportation. Many older adults mentioned that there were no learning venues near their neighborhoods or streets, requiring extra time to travel, which significantly reduced their learning motivation.

**Table 2**  
**Different Reactions on Participation Barriers in Education for Older Adults**

Barrier Category	Content of Barrier	Number of People	Proportion (Percentage)	Frequency	Ratio
Institutional Barriers	The class location makes me uncomfortable	46	6.27%	1048	29%
	The class content is not interesting to me	113	15.40%		
	The instructor is unprofessional or has a poor attitude	57	7.77%		
	The class location is too far, transportation is inconvenient	412	56.13%		
	The class content is difficult, feeling overwhelmed	89	12.13%		
Situational Barriers	Class schedule conflicts with personal daily routine	331	45.10%	878	24%
	Taking care of grandchildren, and doing housework	294	40.05%		
	Family or friends do not support my participation	25	3.41%		
	Participation in learning classes requires payment of fees	84	11.44%		
	Age and physical limitations	97	13.22%		
Intention Barriers	Unable to find a suitable learning environment	378	51.50%	902	25%
	Fear of being ridiculed	19	2.59%		
	Few people of the same gender participate	52	7.08%		
	None of the classmates are familiar	201	27.38%		
	Concerned that being too old will impede learning	213	29.02%		
Information Barriers	Insufficient patience and energy	304	41.42%	837	22%
	Uncertain about what to learn	113	15.40%		
	Fear of learning new technology	222	30.25%		
	Inability to use computers for online classes	164	22.34%		
	Course content does not match desired learning goals	371	50.54%		
	Lack of interest in organized education	80	10.90%		

As for situational barriers, more than half of the older adults believe that “unable to find a suitable learning environment” is the primary barrier, and 40.05% of older adults think that “taking care of grandchildren and doing housework” are the main factors hindering participation in educational activities. Only 3.41% of older adults agreed that “family or friends do not support my participation,” indicating that the vast majority of older adults’ participation in educational activities is not hindered by their families. In the interviews, some respondents mentioned that it was difficult to find a spot in elderly education and that registration was challenging. This situation is due to factors such as the lack of fixed learning duration in universities for the elderly, causing “older students not wanting to graduate” and “new students lacking quotas.” Additionally, the communities or universities for the elderly did not arrange suitable courses that matched the participation needs of older adults.

In terms of intention barriers analysis, “insufficient patience and energy” and “concerned that being too old will impede learning” are the main psychological barriers. Older adults, due to physical and physiological reasons, may worry about not being able to complete learning and feel lonely without fellow learners, leading to hesitance in participating in education. During the interviews, some older students lacked self-confidence, felt that their age and memory decline would make it difficult to perform

well in class, and mentioned that they would experience unnatural and awkward negative emotions if they did not have familiar friends to attend classes together, hindering their participation in education.

Regarding information barriers, 50.54% of older adults believe that “course content does not match desired learning goals”. One-third of older adults “fear of learning new technology,” and 22.34% of older adults cannot use computers for online classes. The educational reforms brought by new technology also impact the older adult population. Compared with institutional barriers, situational barriers, and intention barriers, information barriers have a weaker impact on older adults’ participation in education. On the one hand, this is because the respondents have higher education levels, with nearly 57% of the surveyed older adults having a college degree or above, providing a certain foundation for using information technology. On the other hand, Hangzhou is a representative city for digital transformation, with digital applications widely existing in daily life and education, making older adults not unfamiliar and already accustomed to it. The most significant obstacle lies in the lack of suitable courses that match their needs, which affects older adults’ participation in education to a certain extent.

This study also conducted a differentiated comparison of 734 questionnaires, finding that 76% of the older adults,

or 559 people, are currently participating in education, while 175 older adults, accounting for 24%, have not participated (or previously participated and then dropped out). For the older adult population not participating in education, further analysis revealed that 73% of them have a monthly income of less than 4,000 yuan. The main participation barriers include: institutional barriers such as “the class content is not interesting to me” and “the class location is too far, transportation is inconvenient”; situational barriers mainly consist of “taking care of grandchildren, and doing housework” and “unable to find a suitable learning environment”; intention barriers are reflected in “uncertain about what to learn” and “none of the classmates are familiar”; and information barriers are primarily “course content does not match desired learning goals” and “fear of learning new technology.” Most of the older adults not participating in education have the responsibility of caring for grandchildren. Due to the large age gap between grandparents and grandchildren, generational gaps and conflicts may arise during intergenerational caregiving, caused by differences in values and cultural concepts, leading to barriers in intergenerational learning.

In summary, this study conducted data statistics and analysis on the factors correlated with barriers in community-based elderly education in Hangzhou and carried out empirical analysis from aspects such as gender, age, education level, work experience, income, mental state, learning skills, courses, family, and environmental characteristics. Three levels of explanations and generalizations can be drawn: First, from the perspective of older adults themselves, the willingness to participate in education decreases with age. The younger respondents are more interested in participating in education. Therefore, the decline in physiological function, the influence of personality psychology, and the role of cognitive attitudes in older adults are the personal beliefs that hinder their participation in education and determine their willingness to participate in education, which is the origin of non-participation behavior. Second, from a social perspective, older adults have heavier family responsibilities, lack mutual support and care among peers, and have a weak atmosphere of mutual assistance and friendship in their neighborhoods. Moreover, society’s prejudices and negative impressions of elderly education can easily result in a lack of persistence and insufficient motivation for older adults to participate in education. Third, from an organizational perspective, older adults have strong preferences for course content, with the highest interest in courses such as painting and photography, music and dance, and healthcare-related entertainment and leisure courses. However, the limitations of elderly education institutions, the mismatch between supply and demand for educational resources, and the lack of policy support for elderly education are factors that hinder the creation of a healthy, active lifestyle atmosphere for older adults,

and there is a lack of corresponding spiritual and cultural needs.

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### **3. A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR OVERCOMING PARTICIPATION BARRIERS IN URBAN OLDER ADULTS’ EDUCATION: INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING FOR “THE ELDERLY AND THE YOUNG”**

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#### **3.1 Reshaping Concepts is the Starting Point, Stimulating Individuals’ Willingness and Social Atmosphere for Intergenerational Learning in “the Elderly and the Young”**

Firstly, it is crucial to strengthen the concept of intergenerational learning. Elderly education, as a unique form of education distinct from other education groups, is motivated not by obtaining diplomas or professional titles but by whether the education meets their intrinsic needs. The driving force for older adults to continue their education is, as demonstrated by the analysis of participation barriers, not strongly utilitarian but more focused on alleviating generational conflicts, inner satisfaction, and pleasure in life. It is essential to transform the notion of raising children across generations and establish a concept of intergenerational learning that promotes integration and mutual learning, thereby resolving generational conflicts and tensions. Secondly, it is vital to create an atmosphere of intergenerational learning and enhance the willingness of older adults to learn. According to the theory of older adult personality types, older adults can be divided into five personality types: mature, rocking chair, armored, angry, and self-haters (Fan & Zhang, 2005), and their attitudes and degrees of acceptance towards education differ. For different types of older adults, governments, education management departments, and educators should advocate the concept of intergenerational learning and publicize its practical significance and social value. By transforming the negative attitudes and fears of older adults towards aging and intensifying the promotion of intergenerational learning, older adults will better understand the necessity of learning, thereby increasing their willingness to learn. Finally, efforts should be made to stimulate the subjective initiative of older adults in participating in education. Elderly education is an alternative teaching model to the traditional exam-oriented education, requiring a personalized, diverse, and needs-based education model that is built in a gradual and persistent way. By creating a comfortable learning environment and course content, offering financial assistance or fee waivers, and other favorable policies, older adults will better integrate into society. Embracing the new developments and changes

brought about by digital transformation and continuously learning new knowledge and skills will enable them to enjoy a happy and fulfilling later life.

### **3.2 Mechanism Integration is the Goal: Striving to Create a Collaborative Educational Platform for “the Elderly and the Young” Intergenerational Learning**

Mechanism integration manifests in the collaboration and coordination among governments, communities, and universities, aiming to provide an intergenerational learning environment that fosters understanding and mutual benefit. The core objective of intergenerational learning is to explore cooperative, integrative, and connective mechanisms. Firstly, investigating cooperative mechanisms promotes the involvement of multiple entities in intergenerational learning. Currently, the primary modes of elderly care for older adults are home-based and community-based care. It is imperative to guide social publicity efforts on education and elderly care, creating a supportive environment for older adults to remain engaged. Led by education management departments, efforts should focus on integrating the strengths of communities, universities, and families, providing support services for theoretical and practical aspects of intergenerational learning, constructing a “the Elderly and the Young” intergenerational learning service supply model (Figure 5), encouraging community-university cooperation in researching difficulties in intergenerational learning, implementing pilot projects in communities with the necessary conditions, and strengthening the cultivation of compound talents and the development of volunteer organizations for older adults, offering exemplary experiences and practices for policy formulation, curriculum development, and teacher training. Secondly, advancing integration mechanisms creates a diversified interactive learning model for “the Elderly and the Young” in communities. Drawing upon the United States’ experiences in intergenerational learning, game elements can be incorporated into the learning process by creating game-like scenarios. This enables older adults and children or adolescents to learn and exchange ideas in a harmonious atmosphere. Older adults can experience new things and gain fresh insights, while children can closely appreciate the values and experiences of older adults, effectively stimulating mutual learning enthusiasm for both parties. Lastly, constructing connection mechanisms perfects the specific implementation of “the Elderly and the Young” intergenerational learning. In consideration of the actual needs and demands of “the Elderly and the Young,” comprehensive planning should be made for community-based intergenerational learning support services, analyzing the development trends of elderly education. Advocating the joint participation of communities, senior open universities, and elderly care institutions, a three-in-one intergenerational learning

support service structure system should be established, consisting of a “headquarters + grassroots + network” model for senior open universities. This provides financial, teaching, and resource support, jointly creating a collaborative mechanism for intergenerational learning and compensating for the government’s insufficient human and material resources in elderly education.

### **3.3 Resource Supply is the Driving Force That Can Provide Appropriate and Demand-oriented Intergenerational Learning Content and Courses for “the Elderly and the Young”**

Howard McClusky, the “Father of Gerontological Education” and a professor at the University of Michigan, believes that elderly education courses should satisfy five levels of demand: coping, expression, contribution, influence, and transcendence (Pan, 2017). Existing elderly education courses are primarily focused on health and safety, entertainment and leisure, and medical care and wellness. However, there is a lack of courses related to intergenerational communication, volunteer services, and business management, which hinders the comprehensive development of older adults. There is an urgent need to improve the quality of life and happiness index for both older adults and infants and young children. Firstly, appropriate intergenerational learning content should be provided to enrich the resources for intergenerational learning courses. In consideration of the non-utilitarian, diverse, flexible, and personalized learning characteristics of older adults, educational offerings should be guided by their actual needs, aimed at enriching their lives and enhancing their personal growth. Resources that cater to the learning characteristics of older adults and satisfy individualized and diversified learning needs should be actively supplied. With the needs of “the Elderly and the Young” in mind, educational content should be enriched, and initiatives should be taken to promote mental and physical health education, leisure life education, and life education for older adults. Guidance should be provided for families on early childhood development, cultivating good habits, hygiene and medical care, and intellectual and early education for infants and young children, helping both older adults and young children enrich their lives, promote health, and serve society. Secondly, appropriate intergenerational learning venues should be provided to address institutional barriers such as inconvenient transportation and insufficient facilities. Considering the reduced mobility of older adults, learning venues should be selected in convenient locations. On the one hand, the four-level elderly education network of “city-district/county-township-community” should be improved, striving to establish activity centers for older adults, senior universities, and senior open universities at the district and county (city) levels. On the other hand, community-embedded, distributed, and small-scale intergenerational learning services should be strengthened, such as

intergenerational learning center models that cooperate with neighboring nursing homes and kindergartens within communities. Emphasis should be placed on learning support services for older adults, promptly addressing any issues encountered during the learning process. Thirdly, up-to-date intergenerational teaching content should be provided, making full use of technological means to facilitate learning for older adults. With the development of digital transformation, many older adults need to learn digital technology knowledge in their daily lives and often encounter information technologies such as mobile phones and computers. In response to the changes in the times and the learning interests of older adults, teaching methodologies should be promptly adjusted, and training in the use of intelligent technologies should be strengthened. Corresponding teaching methods and content should be updated to actively overcome information barriers and other issues. Lastly, increasing intergenerational interaction courses can help alleviate the difficulties of intergenerational caregiving. Course and activity designs should take into account the diversity and inclusiveness of different generations, promoting mutual understanding of each other’s lives. Communities or senior universities should focus on providing courses that encourage intergenerational cooperation, such as knowledge-sharing courses for the young and old, intergenerational gaming activities, cross-generational sports interaction courses, and grandparent-grandchild mutual assistance courses. By offering opportunities for older adults and infants and young children to interact and learn together, mutual understanding can be enhanced, and intergenerational tensions in the caregiving process can be alleviated.

### **3.4 Institutional Support is the Guarantee That Can Actively Improve the “the Elderly and the Young” Intergenerational Learning Support Service System**

Investment in intergenerational learning in foreign countries primarily focuses on policies and funding. For example, European countries regularly implement intergenerational learning projects through policy, ensuring that older adults and adolescents have opportunities to learn together (Shao & Li, 2022). Therefore, the intergenerational learning support service system relies heavily on strong support from the state in areas such as policy, funding, and law. Firstly, increase funding for intergenerational learning projects. Funding and financial support are prerequisites for the smooth implementation of intergenerational learning projects. Although the investment returns for intergenerational learning may not be as apparent as those for primary and secondary education, older adults, as the main participants in intergenerational learning, still have great enthusiasm and confidence in learning. Their learning needs should not be overlooked. Funding for “the Elderly

and the Young” intergenerational learning projects can be provided through government direct investment or by establishing senior education foundations to raise donations. Secondly, improve the diverse evaluation system for intergenerational learning. Guiding and assisting older adults and infants in achieving their learning goals is the core value of the intergenerational learning support service system. The effectiveness and rationality of this system depend on the examination of the learning outcomes of both older adults and infants. As a new learning model that integrates formal and informal learning, intergenerational learning is subject to complex factors and environments. Evaluation indicators are often soft indicators, requiring a break from the traditional education evaluation system. An evaluation mechanism should be established for the service capabilities of “the Elderly and the Young” intergenerational learning, with the development of scientific and specific evaluation plans and standards to meet the learning service needs of older adults and infants. Lastly, protect the educational rights of the older adult population. Although the current “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly” has made it clear that older adults have the right to continue to receive education, there is still a significant gap between this and the high-quality development needs of elderly education in the new era. Older adults also need to have equal and balanced access to quality education (Xu, et al, 2018). Special actions should be organized to implement popular science education for the elderly, fully popularize knowledge about elderly education, raise citizens’ awareness of the importance of the right to education for older adults, promote the active participation of older adults in elderly education, and popularize elderly education services to achieve active aging and improve the quality of life for the older adult population.

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## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study, based on the current status of participation in education among older adults in Hangzhou community, comprehensively reviews and analyzes the existence of institutional barriers, situational barriers, intention barriers, and information barriers in elderly education. Intergenerational barriers also seriously affect participation in education, leading to overall consideration of intergenerational learning. Based on the “the Elderly and the Young” perspective, the following suggestions for further improvement are proposed: 1. Guide the atmosphere of intergenerational learning and create a policy environment for elderly care and child care. 2. Provide targeted and inclusive policy support for elderly education. 3. Improve the support service system for intergenerational learning, paving the way and building



bridges for the “the Elderly and the Young” population to receive education. In summary, the following insights can be drawn from the above descriptions and conclusions: 1. Break through policy restrictions to further achieve “caring for the elderly” and “nurturing the young.” 2. Stimulate the vitality of elderly education, explore the establishment of an elderly education “credit bank,” set up a talent database for older adults, and promote new forms of elderly education. 3. Strengthen lifelong learning and establish the concept of “learning in retirement, retiring in learning” as the key factor for older adults to participate in education.

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