EBS BUSINESS SCHOOL

EBS UNIVERSITÄT FÜR WIRTSCHAFT UND RECHT

Educare Essay

BSC Socio-Cultural Impact Paper

Spring Term 2022

Smartphone-Workshop

Mehrgenerationenhaus Oestrich-Winkel

Name: Leonard May

Address: Rheingaustraße 1a

                 65375 Oestrich-Winkel

Submitted to: Dr Markus Kreikebaum

Submission Date: 31.03.2022

Word Count: 2346 words

Table of Content

List of Abbreviations

MGH   Mehrgenerationenhaus Oestrich-Winkel

List of Figures

List of Figures

1   Introduction

In the course of the Bachelor program at EBS University, the students are required to conduct a social service activity in a local institution. This essay is divided into two interconnected parts. The first part is going to cover a detailed description of the workshop preparation and the event itself as well as my personal experiences while setting up and carrying out a smartphone workshop in the Mehrgenerationenhaus Oestrich-Winkel (MGH). Subsequently, the second part is going to reflect on these experiences while contextualising and interpreting them in line with academic literature. The conclusion will cover key learnings from the workshop and how they can affect my personal life or the lives of others.

"enable digital" is a student project initiated by students from the EBS University to support the exchange between students and elderly people.
Digitalisation has arrived amid society and is changing the way we do business, work and live. Many older people are not familiar with smartphones or computers, which could isolate them within society, in everyday life and within their own families. Therefore, "enable digital" aims to offer workshops that introduce the older generation to smartphones or computers. In return, younger people can learn a lot through the exchange with seniors who have experience in life (enable digital, 2019).

Digitalisation is a process that is crucial to be implemented in a developed country such as Germany but often is lacking behind due to a deficiency of implementation methodology. Considering this particular issue, a core objective of the "enable digital" program is to teach elderly people how to use modern technology, such as smartphones and tablets, more efficiently and effectively. Another critical factor is that the future leaders graduating from the universities are aware of other societal perspectives whilst promoting inter-generational exchange. This essay is going to examine the benefits of promoting the use of smartphones as an assistive technology for older adults. Additionally, the effects of a change of perspective on an individual by serving in a social institution are discussed in the reflection part of this essay.

2   Progress Report

2.1   About Mehrgenerationenhaus Oestrich-Winkel

After selecting the particular project in Dr Kreikebaum's class, a briefing call has been arranged with other students who wanted to be active in the project "enable digital". In this meeting, a group allocation was made, and teams were formed to become involved in different social institutions. Our team has been allocated to the Mehrgenerationenhaus Oestrich-Winkel. The concept of MGHs - of which there exist around 450 facilities in Germany at present - is structured meeting places for the four generations to interact together, namely with and among each other. In Oestrich-Winkel, the MGH provides assisted living solutions for the elderly as well. Thus, the MGH Oestrich-Winkel functions as a practical active shaper and social initiator of the demographic change on site. It presents itself with a wide range of offers in the areas of education, care, counselling, and exchange.

2.2   Workshop Preparation

The workshop preparation played a notable role in the social service. Our team had to set up a general structure, prepare a presentation that included a slide deck and a detailed handout, and select adequate teaching material that addresses the participants' needs and wishes. Choosing the teaching material turned out to be the most challenging part of the preparation since we had no information on the participants' level of knowledge. After discussing our concerns with the director of the MGH, Mrs Christiane Kompch-Maneshkarimi, we decided to choose a flexible presentation structure, which allowed us to respond flexibly to the problems and wishes of the seniors.

2.3   Workshop Day 1

In the days leading up to the workshop, I was often excited, nervous, and wondering if our workshop would live up to the participants' expectations. I was the primary contact person for Christiane and felt a slight pressure to perform, as she had often enthused about last years' workshops at the preparation meetings.

Internally, we communicated that my colleague Julian guides the first workshop day and that I run the second day. A doctoral student from EBS University was also present to perform a field study on older adults' behaviour when interacting with modern technology. Christiane welcomed the participants, introduced our group, and handed over the moderation. Our pedagogical concept was built on specific guidelines: concentration, practice application, exchange, relaxation, and reflection.

First, we introduced concepts in our presentation; then, we showed how to perform those tasks by connecting our phone to the projector. This was followed by a task we gave the elderly to perform while constantly providing hands-on assistance. After each task, there was a short break, followed by a reflection on the concept that we had introduced.

We experienced soon that our initial schedule was modified as we realised during the implementation that the practical application phase and our hands-on help took much more time than we expected. Here, it is essential to note that this phase of active exchange was also the most enjoyable and brought the most learning experiences. An important observation was that the participants' attention consistently declined as the workshop progressed. Additionally, some participants showed signs of frustration when tasks became more complex over time. When a group member noticed this behaviour, we decided to take a break, open the windows, and seek direct exchange with the participants. However, these conversations in the break have not been related to smartphones or technology but have been on a more personal basis.

We brought the workshop to an end at a point where we experienced that the attention level was strongly decreasing. This was around half an hour earlier than initially planned. Before everybody left, we asked them to communicate contents that we did not cover yet but that they wanted to learn about. A list of several different topics was compiled, and on that evening, we had to adapt our presentation for the next day according to these demands.

2.4 Workshop Day 2

For the second day of the workshop, I was in the role of the leader of the presentation and what I soon realised was that I had to speak significantly louder and slower than I was used to from university. Hence, I decided to move to the centre of the room and give the presentation from there. The participants very well received this. The second day covered more complex concepts since we covered basic concepts on the first day. We already

noticed a substantial learning curve from all participants. They have been more motivated to learn than on the first day – this occurred since the concepts were more attention-grabbing as we covered communication and entertainment functions.

Since the second workshop day started on a Saturday morning, Christiane organised a lunch with the whole workshop group. At the table, I talked to a ninety-four-year-old senior about my life in Oestrich-Winkel and at university, and he told me stories about his life path and his passion for Oldtimers.

After the break, our presentation part was done, and we asked the participants to pose questions with contents that we did not cover yet. This was followed by feedback to our team, which has been throughout positive, and all participants were very pleased, motivated, and satisfied. This feedback was also received in the anonymous evaluation sheets that we printed out and gave to each senior. Before leaving, one participant approached me and asked whether I would be available to help him synchronise his smartphone with his computer at his homeplace, and we exchanged our contact details. Christiane from the MGH even gave us a basket of donations at the end, which the seniors left for us.

Overall, my experience was throughout positive, although it has been exhausting at some points. My concerns and fears in the days leading up to the workshop have been proven wrong in the course and with the successful completion of the workshop.

3   Reflection

3.1   Smartphone as an Assistive Technology

The overarching guideline of our workshop was to familiarise seniors with the smartphone as an everyday helper and not an enemy. With the further development of smartphones, pure phone functions have evolved to functions such as chatting, voice memos or video calls in the communication area, and the information area (i.e. Google Maps, news, social media) has also become significantly more important. Our mission was to introduce those concepts to the seniors so that they perceive the smartphone as a supportive technology in everyday life.

The chart below shows the survey results on the proportion of smartphone users in the German-speaking population in Germany in 2021, broken down by age group. During

the survey period, it was found that 68.2 per cent of Germans aged 70 and over use a smartphone at least occasionally (Statista, 2021).
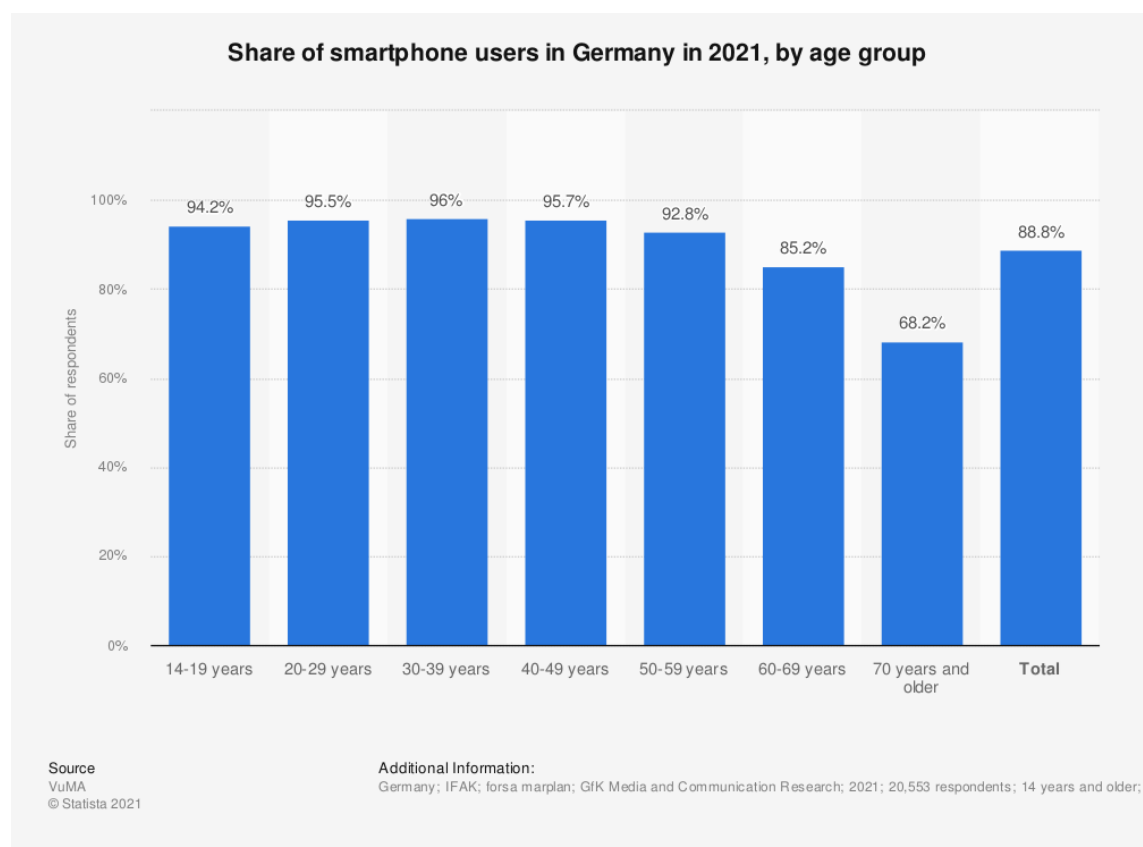
Figure 1. Share of smartphone users in Germany (Statista, 2021).

From this, we can conclude that owning a smartphone is no longer an exception among seniors and that education on the appropriate usage of these devices needs to be fostered.

For older adults, in particular, the ability to learn and understand new skills declines with age. Ageing is an irreversible biological process whose main characteristic is the prevalence of degenerative processes in the human organism. By this characteristic, more problems arise with age. Possible changes in old age include physical changes, mental changes, or changes in life situations (Welford, 1958). These changes can be expressed by a decline in eyesight, dexterity, and hearing or by not being able to process information as quickly, making it harder to remember and to learn new things. Another prevalent problem for older adults is the fear of solitude.

Smartphones possess the potential to tackle those problems; however, the barriers to using a smartphone appropriately are still high today as there is no manual in most cases. Even if manuals exist, they often appear only in digital form and are not accessible by consumers who did not operate digitally before the purchase.

During the workshop, most participants noted the issue that there were no operation instructions for the smartphone. Due to this barrier of proper usage, there existed a notable lack of intrinsic motivation to get more involved with the technology. This is a dilemma since smartphones would allow these people to communicate remotely and more efficiently with family members and friends. What became evident is that many seniors were much more intrinsically motivated to use the technology after receiving proper guidance from our team.

Through personal exchange with the participants, I experienced that solitude, especially in times of covid and lockdowns, is a significant problem. Introducing communication tools beyond texting and telephoning such as Video-Calls helps foster inter-generational exchange because grandparents can visually communicate with their grandchildren. Especially in times of covid, it is still essential to nurture communication within different generations and social groups. This workshop made me realise how important it is to exchange ideas with older generations who have already gained much more experience in life than oneself.

3.2   Change of Perspective

While we were teaching the participants how to use smartphones, I was particularly struck by how important a change of perspective can be in order to recognise societal grievances.

Such a workshop allows all participants to get to know digitisation from a different perspective, allowing both generations to better understand the other generation's views. Nevertheless, above all, the students can learn a lot through the exchange with the seniors who have life experience and are enthusiastic to share their views.

"It is essential for business in general - and management education students in particular - to understand the symbiotic relationship between business and society. They must exercise their power in ways that do not punish those who depend on them or are at the mercy of their demands." (AACSB, 2014). In order to get an understanding of the relationship between society and business, serving in social service is an opportunity to connect with other generations or different cultures. By changing one's personal perspective, people become aware of their privileges and reflect the view of the "taken as given" attitude. After the workshop, our team sat together for some time to exchange experiences and learnings gained. We achieved consensus that moving out of one's personal comfort

zone helped to recognise own privileges in society. My key learning is that by becoming aware of these privileges, I must use them meaningfully in the economy or my future career to create added value for society while considering all social groups and not only those of my "personal bubble".

4   Conclusion

Equitably dealing with smartphones is of great importance so that their potential as everyday helpers can be exploited to the full and so that seniors are not dissociated from technology which - in its core idea - is designed to assist humans in their daily lives. While considering our positive feedback sheets, the "enable digital" project is actively shaping society towards more inclusion and acceptance among generations. This intergenerational exchange helps in the appropriate guidance and implementation of digital technologies for the elderly in everyday life. It results in high acceptance and an increase in the intrinsic motivation of the seniors. However, these smartphone workshops constitute only a small part of the changes needed in this respect. The economy and the government must provide better solutions for seniors to ensure the inclusion of all generations in the digital revolution.

This workshop experience provides numerous implications and recommendations for corporations and managers of technology enterprises. It is essential for companies to focus on more careful and practical guidance on the functions of the devices. They should also offer services that enable proper installation of the devices, as this is often the most challenging part and leads to barriers to entry, as some participants said. Furthermore, the government should offer more workshops explaining valuable technologies for older adults and explaining their use. As a result of these workshops, older people and technology can be brought together on a different level, and the necessary trust and comprehension can be established. This is needed to establish a more inclusive society which is the core of a healthy society, especially in view of the demographic change.

References

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). (2004). Ethics Education in Business Schools. Report of the Ethics Education Task Force to AACSB International Board of Directors. St. Louis, MO: AACSB International.

Baltes, M., & Carstensen, L. (1996). The Process of Successful Ageing. *Ageing and Society, 16*(4), pp. 397-422.

Enable Digital. (2019). Was ist Enable Digital? Retrieved 01 February 2022, from https://enabledigital.jimdofree.com

Herde, A. (2017). Perspektivwechsel für Führungskräfte – interdisziplinäre und intersektorale Lern- und Erfahrungswelten. In B. Spieß & N. Fabisch (Eds.), *CSR und neue Arbeitswelten: Perspektivwechsel in Zeiten von Nachhaltigkeit, Digitalisierung und Industrie 4.0* (pp. 341-355). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Kreikebaum, M. (2011). Die Erfahrung macht den Sprung. Service Learning eröffnet neue Perspektiven für die Ausbildung sozialer Verantwortung. In: Haase, M.; Mirkovic, S.; Schumann, O. J.: Ethics Education, Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik, München, Rainer Hampp Verlag, p. 155–169.

Statista. (2021). Share of smartphone users in Germany in 2021, by age group. Retrieved 02 February 2022, from http://www.vuma.de/

Welford, A. T. (1958). Ageing and human skill. Oxford Univer. Press.