

The future of Active Ageing and related needs for research

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A chapter in the book 'A Research Agenda for Ageing and Social Policy' by Kai Leichsenring & Alexandre Sidorenko (2024)

Definitions and conceptualizations in political documents and scientific literature

Active ageing is an important turning point in the construction of population and individual ageing in research, practice and social policy.

Activation theory → successful & healthy + productive ageing → active ageing

Active ageing on the international agenda

- WHO, 2002: *“the process of optimizing opportunities for maintaining health, participation in society and safety in order to ensure the quality of life as the population ages”*
- AA aim – QoL – A.Sen’s capability approach

RQ: *To what extent do existing approaches to active ageing meet the needs of ageing societies and promote a better quality of life? What kind of new research do we need in order to further develop our understanding of active ageing?*

Active ageing criticism

- Reduction of some definitions of AA to productive ageing
- Too much emphasis on the ‘young-old’ activities
- Not enough room for empowering and agency of old people

Measurement

Active ageing – a policy instrument aimed at helping policymakers understand that revitalizing some strategic social policies could give their countries high economic and social returns in an ageing society

WHO's def – 3 major components: health – participation - safety

Extremely difficult to operationalize

Lack of sufficient (dynamic and comparative) data

Early attempts – (Avramov & Maskova, 2003)

Active ageing index (2012) – PAU UNECE & the EC Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Integration & the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research

- Evidence-based policy tool – to measure the untapped potential of older people for active ageing
- With application to the EU countries
- Asian AAI

Criticism

A research agenda for active ageing

WHO re-emphasize on healthy ageing and the UN decade on healthy ageing

- Active ageing potential can be hardly achieved without healthy ageing

Further conceptualization and deeper theoretical grounding of AA

- Broader social theories to 'deconstruct power relations within the society'
- More empirical & interdisciplinary research – AA components, factors
 - Healthy and active ageing
 - Diversity and heterogeneity of older people, accumulated inequalities and AA
- New data

COVID-19 impact – ageism, intergenerational solidarity as a core principle of AA

AA in the context of digitalization, and the role of technologies in promoting healthy and active ageing

Meso-level of AA – physical and social environment

Public administration: whether and to what extent existing or planning social policy programmes and initiatives include the issues of individual and population ageing and apply ideas of active ageing