



LIFELONG LEARNING

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Vol. 11
Part I
Parallel edition

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Proceedings of 11th International Cooperation

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Scientific editors
N.A. Lobanov, V.N. Skvortsov

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The eleventh volume of the proceedings of international cooperation contains reports of the participants of the 11th International Conference "Lifelong Learning: Continuous education for sustainable development". Scientists and researchers from Australia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, the USA, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Finland, the Czech Republic took part.

Educational institutions of all levels and the very content of education are gaining more and more academic freedom in all countries and student are gaining academic mobility that is the most important condition for development of continuous education. All reports mention that continuous education preserving its common features of national identity is developing as a global megatrend. It is becoming an important part of lifestyle regardless of age. That is why reports that discuss the problem of adult and the elderly education in the context of maintenance of mental health and cognitive potential are singled out into separate section. This year the most popular topics are socio-cultural aspects of continuous education and their place in formation of the specialist and spiritual and moral personality, as well as questions of training quality of teachers and professionalism of their work in the system of continuous education. Unchanged is the interest towards the sources of the process, to the questions of theory and methodology of continuous education. It seems that continuous education, having spread its influence, is becoming an active part of sustainable regional and universal development. That means that it follows those tasks that were suggested at the UN Conference for environment and development (Rio-de-Janeiro, 1992) and twenty years later at "Rio+20" Summit.

Proceedings of international cooperation can be of interest for international pedagogical community – school teachers, university lecturers and professors, regional education authorities and education managers as well as researchers and doctoral students.

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EDUCATIONAL AREAS OF SENIOR ACTIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

M. Stawiak-Ososińska

In today's world there have been enormous in recent years, demographic changes that are caused by immigration and a decline in births compared to deaths. These changes particularly affect Europe. European society is aging¹ at an alarming rate. The number of seniors has begun to increase dramatically and there have been fewer and fewer people of working age. It is estimated that currently there are around 605 million of elderly people. In Europe, seniors constitute more than one fifth of the society. In the EU at the beginning of 2010, there was a population of 501.1 million people, of which approximately 87.1 million were people aged 65 years and older. It has been estimated that by 2020 as much as 25 percent of EU's population will have exceeded 65 years².

Elderly people are not a homogenous group, and every stage of aging is characterized by different characteristics and requirements. Most EU countries appear to care for all seniors³, both those who are still at work (by preventing discrimination in the workplace based on age), as well as those who have gone to have a well-deserved rest. The latter are provided separate retirement and pension from each country in which they were insured. However, the internal laws of individual states govern ensuring social welfare to seniors. In recent years, more and more activity is also shown to improve the quality and conditions of life of elderly people to reduce their morbidity and disability. The main challenges, in this regard, are to provide seniors with universal access to "high-quality medical care while ensuring the financial soundness of the health care system (...) and to provide them with adequate pensions across the EU"⁴. More and more attention is paid to the activation of this social group, promoting the so-called. "Active aging",

¹ Aging is a biological, psychological and social process effecting life of the unit. It is therefore difficult to clearly define an affiliation of seniors to a certain group, because there is no unanimity as to the contractual threshold of old age. The social feeling for elderly age begins with retirement. Senility, however, cannot be reduced to be achieved by a certain chronological age, because it is an individual process taking place in the human mind rather than biological in nature. See. Europe for Seniors - Seniors for Europe. Grundtvig beneficiaries about the benefits of European cooperation, p.1-2, http://www.grundtvig.org.pl/sites/grundtvig.org.pl/files/europa_seniorom-seniorzy_europie.pdf

² The published data show that there has been a particularly rapid growth in the number of elderly people in recent years in Slovenia, Germany, Italy, Greece and the Baltic EU Member States. Detailed data on the progressive aging of Europe see. Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. Statistical Portrait of the European Union 2012, p.19, in; http://analizy.mpips.gov.pl/images/stories/publ_i_raporty/ER2012/final_statystyczny_portret_UE_pl.pdf

³ Activities for seniors have been strongly emphasized in the UE for a long time. It could be seen through the European Year of Elderly People and Solidarity between Generations (1993), in the development of the European Social Charter, and the International Year of Senior (1999), whose priority was to aim at "Society for People of All Ages," which encouraged activation of the elderly. The crowning of the efforts for the elderly people is the provision of the latest EU document, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, where we read that "the Union recognizes and respects the rights of the elderly to live a dignified and independent life and to participate in social and cultural life" (Article 25) http://www.grundtvig.org.pl/sites/grundtvig.org.pl/files/europa_seniorom-seniorzy_europie.pdf

⁴ <http://www.twojaeuropa.pl/3643/europejski-dzien-seniora>

as an increasing number of seniors want to continue spending their free time¹ in an active and creative way after their retirement.

One form of activation is to educate seniors having a slightly different form than the education of young people, but it plays a considerable role in the acquisition of new skills and competencies necessary for the proper functioning in everyday life. Teaching of the elderly requires the autonomous approach, the use of flexible solutions, interactivity². From 1 January 2007 until the end of 2013 the EU's Education System Development Foundation runs a program "Learning for Life" ("Life Long Learning"), whose purpose is to "promote intercultural dialogue, self-realization and entrepreneurship exercise among the elderly." In addition, the Grundtvig program covers a wide range of projects supporting the education of adults and the elderly³.

Education of elderly people in many countries is gaining more and more supporters every year. This applies to both entertainment activities, as well as the typical education⁴. Senior citizens are aware of the fact that many of their professional skills have already devalued, and by updating existing knowledge and acquiring new skills will not be thrown out of public life. Therefore, in recent years they have been becoming more and more serious educational clients on the market and have been instructed to help them raise the awareness and knowledge of health, as well as to acquire certain practical skills, such as use of new web tools, management of an online bank account, etc., but above all maintain human relationships and develop interests.

In response to public demand in all the countries of Europe education institutions for seniors are formed, focused on the intellectual, psychological, physical and social activation of the elderly. Bodies which have rich traditions⁵ and remarkable experience in teaching seniors are Universities of the Third Age (UTA)⁶. UTA are grassroots of social movement that meets with great kindness of scientists, local authorities and various social groups⁷. Universities operate under the auspices of universities, community centers, libraries, day care homes and welfare centers. Attending classes at UTA seniors have the opportunity to meet many interesting people (politicians, media, artists, social activists, scientists, etc.).

¹ Mainly by preventing the isolation of elderly people and involving them in projects of intergenerational integration. For active aging involves: aging in good health, active participation in social life, fulfillment in life and more independence in everyday life. Active aging is also improving the functioning of the elderly, so that they can remain independent for as long as possible.

² <http://m.onet.pl/wiadomosci/kraj,lnz7n>

³ Ibid.

⁴ "According to the WHO, a solid education at a young age, combined with the ability to learn throughout life enables people in later life to adapt better to a changing environment, and preserve the autonomy and independence", <http://www.edunews.pl/badania-i-debaty/badania/482>

⁵ For more see. J. Halicki, Education of seniors in terms of the theory of competence. Comparative historical study, Bialystok 2000, p.42-51.

⁶ In view of the fact that UTA operate in different cultures, different models of these institutions have developed: a model of recreation (set to travel, sightseeing, tourist events), model-oriented on self-education circles, animators running studio circles; diversified business leading model including professional pro activity. The O. Czerniawska, University of the Third Age, 30 years of operation. The Changes, Dilemmas and Expectations in the Era of Post-modern, "Chowanna" 2009, Volume № 2, p.99.

⁷ Mogielnicka M. The Role of Activity in the Lives of Elderly People - a program workshop "Add Life to Years", in: Life at Old Age, edited by B. Bugajski, Szczecin 2007, p.374.

The main objective of UTA is to stimulate the elderly¹. Educational opportunities are flexible, typically tailored to the needs and interests of the students. "Appropriate selection of the content of lectures, understanding of social and political, scientific and technological achievements of the changing environment in which modern man lives stimulates its further development and prevents remaining behind progress"². Currently, among the classes taught at UTA there are popular science lectures on various subjects (much interest among others are lectures in the field of medicine, nutrition, gardening, law, history, sexuality of the elderly), and senior students are, moreover, involved in computer classes, workshops, psychological (e.g. in-service workshops with memory), literature, art, theater, singing, cabaret, recreational gymnastics classes, cooking classes, mobility and rehabilitation, tourism sightseeing tours, outdoor events, learn foreign languages, dance, as well as resting and helping others³. Places where educational activities are implemented for senior citizens are now also various cultural and scientific institutions, theatres, libraries, museums, community centers and, above all, a specially appointed senior clubs. In the community centers and other facilities seniors can attend courses and trainings in many areas of life. In all types of institutions, the most popular among seniors are courses in ICT, foreign language, dance, art and specialist courses which prepare them for employment at extra work. These types of classes are usually in groups of, from several to over a dozen people, under the guidance of qualified coaches and teachers.

Over the last few years, particular emphasis in all EU countries has been put on, media education courses. The technological revolution – computers, the Internet, mobile phones, and credit cards, have changed daily reality in which there are also seniors. To dispense with the concerns and fears to those of modern equipment it is necessary to prepare the social group for skillful use of the new media⁴. In the context of developing the information society and to gradually transfer most of human activity into the cyberspace, the use of information and communication technologies is one of the basic skills to effectively meet their needs, self-fulfillment and social integration. With the rapid growth of electronic media, especially interactive multimedia it becomes extremely important to provide elderly people with the opportunity to acquire skills to use them. Digital networks enable the people to communicate in daily life and remain independent for as long as possible. It is particularly important for today's seniors to master the skills of using the Internet, because through the use of various websites and e-mails senior citizens gain the ability to track events taking place outside of their home and maintain regular contact with family members who live far away and friends. These contacts are often intensified by the skills of operating Skype communicator or

¹ A. Błachnio, *Senility Non-profit, voluntary organizations at the Universities of the Third Age in Poland and around the world*, Bydgoszcz 2012, p.93.

² A. Błachnio, *Senility Non-profit ...*, p. 94.

³ O. Jabłonko, *Education in the Lives of Seniors*, in: *Seniors in Society - A Society for the Elderly*, edited by M. Makuch, D. Moron, Wrocław 2011, p. 104.

⁴ The importance of media education for the elderly is emphasized by the European Parliament draft resolution on media literacy in the digital environment, indicating that media education must include all citizens: children, youth, adults, the elderly and people with disabilities. See: Committee of Culture and Education 2008/2129 (INI), in: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/pr/736/736453/736453pl.pdf

similar applications enabling mutual vision. Internet chat rooms can allow elderly people, who are often condemned to remaining at home, to contact people with similar interests, and thereby reduce their isolation¹.

A crucial element of the online education is the ability to use e-health tools, involving all sorts of ICT applications for disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, control, and conduct a healthy lifestyle. Tools of this kind are used, inter alia, for the communication between the patient and the providers of the healthcare industry, the transfer of data between institutions and direct contacts both between patients and health care professionals. They may also include a network of health information, electronic records, telemedicine services and portable or wearable devices for the communication, used to support and monitor the patient's health². "The e-health can be very helpful especially for those who, for various reasons, will have a long time to stay at home. Students at online courses are also prepared for self-shopping network. This ability may be necessary, and bring tangible benefits to those who have mobility problems. Here, it is important to sensitize students to what dangers they may be exposed using the Internet service³.

An extremely valuable skill acquired during the course of using the Internet service is operating of an individual bank account. For many seniors this is a huge barrier. They wary the volume of information that is completely new to them and incomprehensible. Banking, logging in, passwords, pins, a lot of signatures and envelopes with mysterious numbers – for seniors is (usually) an insurmountable barrier. This situation is changed at courses in which students are familiarized with the safety regulations, operating bank accounts over the Internet, learn how to process, check balances, make transfers, etc⁴. Having mastered these skills they become more available, independent, self-reliant. Ability to use the Internet is slowly beginning to be used by senior citizens for e-learning. This type of education starts to be used mainly by retirees who have access to technical innovations. This form of education makes it possible through video or audio conferences to contact the prominent figures of social, economic, medical and artistic life, etc. at a distance. For many seniors using e-learning is still a huge barrier, but they realize that by such education they can expand their knowledge, meet a huge crowd of their peers from around the world in the Network⁵.

Education is important at every stage of life, even at an elderly age. Today, more and more elderly people have benefited from various training opportunities (just a pity that they are not available to the same extent in all Member States). Seniors realize that "Education without coercion, without the need to acquire a profession, enhancing skills, but voluntary (...) becomes a way to realize their own humanity, their own experience of being"⁶. The share of elderly people in groups organized by local communities and non-governmental organizations is an

¹ <http://wiadomosci.ngo.pl/wiadomosci/826819.html>

² <http://www.ezdrowie.lodzkie.pl/index.php?id=64>

³ <http://wiadomosci.ngo.pl/wiadomosci/826819.html>

⁴ http://di.com.pl/news/43922,0,Jak_nauczyc_seniora_obslugi_internetu.html # continue

⁵ N. Walter, *New Media in the life of an old man, in old age in the perspective of teacher education*, edited by A. Tokaj, Leszno 2008, p. 163–164.

⁶ A. Majewska-Kafarowska, *Education (seniors?) In the process of Social Rehabilitation of the Aging Population, "Chowanna" 2009, Volume No. 2, p.222.*

important source of informal learning. Learning positively effects self-esteem of seniors, and being in the peer group plays an important function of revitalization¹. With the new capabilities offered by the present, educationally active seniors do not feel isolated and useless. The personalities of the students have been undergoing visible positive changes. They become confident, creative, take initiative, attend various types of additional training classes, improving their overall physical and mental fitness and active citizenship. They are also more communicative, more likely to turn to friends and family.

These positive developments could have been influenced by the computer and the Internet training, for new digital technologies determine fundamental changes of communication models and relationships. Media Education organized for seniors can resist the stereotypes and dispel the myth that older people are people of the third category, people almost useless, limited by afflictions of age or illness. Media contribute to the cheerful experience of elderly age, activity and satisfaction, optimism and spiritual joy.

¹ A. Błachnio, *Senility Non profit ...* , p.95.