

*Katarzyna Sygulska*¹

A report from the International Scientific Conference

**“Healthy ageing: multidisciplinary perspectives, life-span applications”,
Cracow, 23–25 March 2017**

The international scientific conference entitled “Healthy ageing: multidisciplinary perspectives, life-span applications” took place on March 23–25, 2017. The meeting was organised by the Faculty of Social Pedagogy and Andragogy (at the Institute of Educational Sciences) and the Faculty of Psychology of the Pedagogical University of Cracow. The purpose of the conference was the review of the latest knowledge about the optimal course of late adulthood and old age, the diagnosis of the practices supporting the human development and possibilities to maintain high quality of life during this period.

The meeting was organised in partnership with the City of Cracow, while the Magical Cracow was the media patron (Krakow.pl). The honorary patronage over the conference was taken by Rector of the Pedagogical University in Cracow. **The scientific patronage over the conference was held by the Association of Social Gerontologists.**

The conference was attended by 57 participants presenting papers. The speakers represented a total of 24 scientific units. The meeting was attended both by the Polish and foreign scientists – from the USA, Ukraine, Italy and Malta. The conference was multidisciplinary – invited guests represented such fields of education like: pedagogy, psychology, sociology, health sciences, speech language pathology and economics.

Not only students, researchers and practitioners were the listeners, but also participants of the University of the Third Age, operating at the Pedagogical University. The subject of health was treated holistically on the conference – the physical, mental and social aspects were included. The meeting was both theoretical and practical. The recipients were presented with the issue of various problems of the elderly, as well as forms of help and care for seniors. Thanks to the meeting, the participants got to know different faces of the old age.

The first plenary session was held on Thursday, which subject focused on the spiritual development of the elderly. This part addressed the issues of human development from the andragogical perspective, old age as a context for spiritual development, the proposal to expand the Erik Erikson’s theory, communication with seniors, sharing the life experience and narrative gerontology in theory and practice.

The next plenary session was held on the second day of the conference, on Friday. The presented papers focused on the opportunities and limitations in supporting the development of sessions (in the health perspective). In this part, the speakers talked about senior policy, active and healthy ageing, human sexuality, quality of life, as well as the incurable disease, which is an educational situation.

1 Pedagogical University of Cracow.

On the same day, the third plenary session was held, which also referred to the opportunities and problems in supporting the development of the elderly, but in the perspective of social policy. The presented topics are: "The policy of healthy aging as an example of sub-policy of life", "Needs and opportunities for development of the elderly in Ukraine", "Our common senility, or how does the social policy shape the spaces that are friendly to seniors and is it really happening? On the example of Poland", "Senior in the institutional perspective of pro-senior policy of the country. Facts and myths.", "Helping the older inhabitants of Cracow search for the meaning of life – the systemic actions of the Cracow self-government".

Five parallel thematic sessions were held on the first day of the conference. The first one concerned the aging process in the geragogical perspective. This section analysed the issues, such as: wisdom and education of seniors, activity and interests of the elderly, as well as the roles they play.

The next session was called "Prevention, participation, protection, partnership". The speakers discussed, among others, the topic of proactive living space, senior support system, coping with difficulties. They talked about the physical activity of the elderly, problems in communicating with the sick and the quality of life.

The third thematic session referred to suffering and ways of dealing with it. The speeches focused on topics, such as: the course of life in intellectually disabled, geragogy, experiencing pain by patients with cancer, reinforcing hope in seniors, quality of life of the disabled elderly, successful aging and senior care.

The next part concerned the development potential of the person at the old age. This session was devoted to the following topics: "Narrative identity of the elderly", "The course of life – autobiographical narration in the context of developmental tasks of R.J. Havighurst", "How to become a tantric instead of a grumbler?", "Loneliness and solitude in the experiences and narratives of marriages with a great length of married life", "Implementation of development tasks in late adulthood and ways of measuring it", "Personal resources and implementation of development tasks by women in late adulthood", "Existence. Existential counselling for seniors in narrative perspectives. Selected issues" and "Critical events in the life of the elderly".

The last thematic session was focused on communicating the experience between generations. The following, among others, was discussed: good practices, the quality of life of the seniors in the intergenerational optics, family in the reflection of older people. The issues of learning from the experiences of others, the role of grandparents in the lives of grandchildren, the attractiveness of seniors, the education of older people, as well as the intergenerational transmission of values were discussed.

Three interesting workshops were also prepared for the conference participants, which attracted great interest. The first one was held on Friday, and concerned the narrative strategies in gerontological practice. The remaining workshops took place in parallel on the last day of the conference. One of them was called "Life as a Story.

Methodology of the memoir writing courses”, the second workshop was about film therapy for the elderly.

The conference has become a place for theoretical reflections and exchange of research experiences on aging and old age. The meeting resulted in interesting lectures, which have contributed to science. The conference was attended by valued academics from the country and abroad, practitioners dealing with seniors, as well as representatives of senior institutions. The high rating of the meeting is composed of: participation of gerontological authorities, a very rich program, the quality of speeches, creative discussions, interesting workshops, as well as the number of represented environments. The value of the event also results from the fact that the practical proposals of changes were presented, which can have a positive impact in the future.