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Selected Aspects of Aging Polish Perspective

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Edited by
Artur Fabiś, Marcin Muszyński, Rafał Iwański

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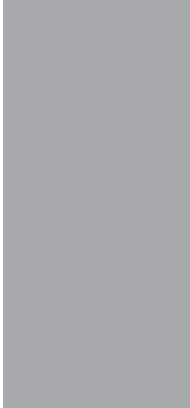
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Introduction

In 2019, we are happy to present our readers with the first volume of our journal. In this issue, we present English texts addressing the selected aspects of aging and old age as seen from the perspective of Poland. Thus, the publication is dedicated in the first place to researchers and professionals from other countries, who wish to get some insight into the nature of Polish studies into social gerontology and practical solutions implemented in Poland. The articles presented herein focus on three main perspectives: socio-economic, andragogical-gerontological, and methodological.

The first part begins with the overview by Katarzyna Sygulska, in which the author describes the institutional support of the elderly in Poland. Recalling numerous, recent research data, she presents the image of an older person in Poland from a multigenerational perspective. In this context, she analyses the existing senior policy and forms of senior care and support. In other text, Paweł Jaskuła conducts an interesting comparative analysis of the economic barriers resulting from the demographic decline in the selected former Soviet states and Poland. The results of his analysis shed some light on the question of economic threats caused by the aging of the analyzed societies. Rafał Iwański presents a detailed analysis of the life of seniors in three areas: micro, mezzo, and macro. The results of the study conducted in a sample of 150 respondents show the living conditions of older people in a big metropolis and the urgent need to adapt the private and public space to the aging population. The final paper in the first part is by Barbara Kędzierska who presents the phenomenon of the rapidly developing digital environment which older people find ever harder to operate in. To prevent this gap, the author identifies the key information and media competencies seniors must improve so they could navigate the virtual reality.

Another aspect of aging in Poland, addressed in this volume, is the andragogical and gerontological perspective. The text by Elżbieta Dubas is a comprehensive introduction to this area of interest. The author presents the final phase of human

life – aging as a stage when the individual development is still possible through adaptation, transgression, and transcendence. The author describes five dimensions of human development (biological, mental, social, cultural and spiritual), which she then relates to the three models: deficit model of old age, active old age model, development model of old age. Krystyna Kacprowska describes the specificity of learning in old age from Polish perspective especially two forms of activity – dance and learning foreign languages. In other paper, Renata Konieczna-Woźniak and Artur Fabiś describe the history and development of the University of the Third Age in Poland, a form of adult education that is known globally though quite specific for Poland. The authors present the extraordinary dynamic of the development of Pierre Vellas' idea and show the unique conditions of learning in the old age in Poland. They provide statistical data and numerous references to the sources and other, relevant publications on this topic. Some of the texts address the issue of the prevention of the marginalization of older people through adult education. Elżbieta Trafiałek describes the methods used by the Universities of the Third Age in the world and Poland to include seniors in the social life and thus, to refute the negative stereotypes about old age. The educational aspect of aging has been also addressed by Angelika Felska who writes about the problem of the rapidly changing social reality of the 21st century and the challenges resulting from it. The author focuses on the need for continuous development and update of knowledge among seniors, which can be achieved through learning at “folk universities”. The second part is summed up by the article by Małgorzata Rozenbajgier who presents different forms of activities of seniors and their motivation. The author shows the results of the research she has conducted among active seniors.

The third, methodological perspective, is shown in the text by Marcin Muszyński, in which he analyses how aging theories formed upon different socio-cultural grounds are received by the Polish researchers. In the second part of the paper, the author proposes a reconstruction of the aging theory using genetic structuralism as the method.

Our journal gathers – and this issue is the evidence – gerontology experts from many scientific fields and disciplines: pedagogy, sociology, psychology, social work, history, economy, philosophy or architecture. Such a multidisciplinary perspective provides a more comprehensive view of the problems we focus on. The texts published herein were written by researchers from many disciplines and different academic centers. They may become a valuable resource, providing not only insights into the theory development, research methodology and gerontological practice in Poland; they can also be used as the base for comparative studies, thus be the starting point of international research projects.

Editors

Artur Fabiś, Marcin Muszyński, Rafał Iwański

ARTICLES

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Katarzyna Sygulska¹

Support system for the elderly in Poland – selected aspects

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Keywords: old age, aging, the elderly in Poland, senior policy

Abstract

The article deals with the topic of supporting the elderly in Poland. The text presents selected aspects of this issue: the problem of aging of the society, the attitude of Poles towards seniors, senior policy, the issue of family and institutional care over the elderly. The article also contains recommendations on helping the oldest members of the society.

Introduction

The longer duration of human life, the aging process of the society, the transformation of the care model for seniors and the problem of managing the activity of people in post-working age are the main reasons for the interest of scientists in the problem of old age (Szarota, 2004, p. 94).

The aim of the article is to show the selected aspects of supporting older people in Poland. The text presents the subject from a macro-social perspective (data on the senior policy) and mezzo-social perspective (selected institutions supporting the elderly). The article deals with the problem of the aging population and care for seniors. Recommendations were also made to improve the situation of the oldest generation.

The text contains fragments of the dissertation “Critical events as factors shaping the sense of the quality of life of the elderly” – supervisor: Ph.D. hab. Zofia Szarota, PU professor; assistant supervisor: Ph.D. hab. Artur Fabiś.

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Aging of society

In Poland, demographic growth has slowed down in the last quarter-century. There are significant changes in the age structure of the population. The aging process of society results from the extension of human life expectancy and low fertility levels. It is also deepened by the increased economic emigration of young people. The coming years will be characterized by an increase in the population in the oldest age groups (<http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/sytuacja-demograficzna-osob-starszych-i-konsekwencje-starzenia-sie-ludnosci-polski-w-swietle-prognozy-na-lata-2014-2050,18,1.html>). Forecasts show that the number of seniors (over 60 years of age) will increase worldwide from around 600 million in 2000 to over 2 billion in 2050 (Ombudsman Website). In 2016, the average life expectancy in Poland was 74 years of age for men and 82 for women. Poles live about 19 years longer than in the middle of the last century (<http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/trwanie-zycia/trwanie-zycia-w-2016-r-,2,11.html>). Given the period after World War II, we can see an increase in the number of people aged 80 and older. In 1950–2012, their number increased eightfold, while the total population increased by 55% at that time, and the number of seniors aged 65 and older increased by 316% (Szukalski, 2014, p. 59).

Increasing the elderly population raises various issues that apply to the whole world and individual countries. According to Tadeusz Aleksander, these are: economic problems that come down to the issue of benefits and services for seniors, social problems that include health care, social assistance, as well as leisure management, and scientific problems – the emerging and developing gerontological and geriatric institutes will devote more and more attention to the phenomenon of old age (Aleksander, 2009, p. 291). The increasing number of the elderly entails an increase in costs in the area of three systems: pension, health care and social assistance (Szukalski, 2011). Today, the position of seniors in the family and society has changed due to the increase in their number, intensive changes, people's attitude towards the future, the intense nature of industrialization and urbanization, as well as social, economic and political changes (Bojanowska, 2012, p. 23).

Poles on the oldest generation

According to the research carried out by CBOS, Poles claim that seniors are needed in the society – 87% of respondents said so. Every tenth respondent expressed the view that older people are rather a burden. The opinions expressed turned out to be dependent on the level of education and age. As the level of education increases, the tendency for the negative perception of seniors decreases. It turned out that with age, the attitude towards older people decreases. Respondents aged 65 and over most often expressed the view that seniors are a burden to others (http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2009/K_157_09.PDF). Perhaps older people identify old age with a

burden, looking through the prism of their own negative experiences. Difficulties related to obtaining certain services, such as medical services, can contribute to this state of affairs. Low self-esteem can also be a source of these opinions.

Poles said that seniors are needed in the society because they play an important role of a grandmother or grandfather, taking care of grandchildren (97%), have valuable knowledge of life experience (95%), are good neighbors, noticing what is happening in the environment (92%), perform socially useful functions (88%), for example, in the housing estate council or charity organizations (http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2009/K_157_09.PDF). The overwhelming majority of respondents indicate the high value of the functioning of seniors in society is optimistic information. Their help in taking care of the youngest family members is particularly valued – grandparents provide their grandchildren not only with care but above all, affection.

Senior policy

The aging policy (old age) in European Union countries, including Poland, focuses on assisting disabled people and people in need of financial support. Its key element is activities in the field of inclusion and integration of seniors. The most important goals of EU policy directed at the elderly include: ensuring adequate livelihoods, social security, health, and nursing care, supporting independence, adapting housing to the needs of users, providing conditions for the integration of seniors with the local community and intergenerational integration (Szarota, 2015, p. 46).

Social policy is initiated on a global, national, regional and local scale. The global (widest) range covers the activities of international entities, associations, and NGOs. National policy is implemented by the president, parliament, government, ministries, as well as various associations and NGOs. Initiatives on a regional scale refer to the functioning of voivodeship offices, regional centers of social policy, as well as non-governmental entities. On the other hand, local policy (with the narrowest range) covers the activities of municipality offices, local institutions and non-governmental organizations (Szarota, 2010, p. 192).

Government programs implementing policy towards the elderly include “ASOS” and “Senior-WIGOR”. The website of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy provides information on the “ASOS” program: “The program (...) is a comprehensive undertaking, taking into account the areas and directions of support enabling the achievement of the main goal of improving the quality and standard of living of the elderly for dignified aging through social activity. The program assumes the practical inclusion of the NGO sector in activities aimed at engaging seniors. (...) The assumptions of the Program can only be realized through planning, designing and implementing long-term actions that achieve the long-term goals” (Website of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy a). Taking up an activity is one of the

main conditions for healthy aging. An important role in this process is also fulfilled by cooperation and intra-generational and intergenerational integration.

Referring to the described program, Artur Fabiś poses important thought-provoking questions: "And what about the expectations of the aging people themselves? Should they adapt to the offer to act as the decision-makers wish? And what about those who cannot articulate their needs? Do they have the same chances for self-realization as those who chose an active aging model (or adapted to this model)? It should rather be expected that support for the development of aging should not focus solely on the already active and engaged seniors, but that the needs of the rest of the oldest generations should be taken into account. Then one can also expect that the commitment, and not only the narrowly understood activity, will provide them with the satisfaction leading them to dignified, happy and own old age" (Fabiś, 2017, p. 16). A. Fabiś emphasizes that an important feature of the expected old age is the free choice of the individual.

This program assumes activities simultaneously in four areas that relate to the social activity of older people. It is based on the priorities listed below:

- Education of seniors. It refers to activities aimed at developing the educational offer for people in late adulthood. It also refers to the potential of mutual learning, development of modern forms of education (non-formal and informal).

- Social activity promoting intra and intergenerational integration. It concerns the development of various forms of seniors' activity using the current social infrastructure, for example, libraries or community centers. It is also important to include young people in joint activities, which will allow for mutual understanding as well as social competence development.

- Social participation of seniors. It concerns activities aimed at increasing senior participation in public, social, economic, cultural and political life (which will affect the development of civil society). Organizations that represent the interest of seniors as well as affect their involvement in the functioning of local communities have an important function in this area.

- Social services for seniors. It refers to the development of various forms of support for people in late adulthood (due to increased access and quality of social services for seniors). Building local support networks that should be based on volunteers (to work on creating a self-help environment) is important here (Website of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy).

The "Senior-WIGOR" program provides for financial support for local government units in achieving their own goals set out in art. 17 par. 2 point 3, art. 19 point 11 and art. 21 point 5 of the Act of March 12, 2004, on social assistance (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 182, as amended). This program applies to all voivodships. Local government units decide whether they want to participate in the program. Institutions participating in the program are obliged to submit annual reports on the implementa-

tion of the program (competent minister dealing with social security) (Website of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy b).

The “Senior-WIGOR” program refers to the recommendations contained in the “Guidelines for Long-Term Senior Policy in Poland for 2014–2020”. This mainly concerns the care and educational services, as well as self-help activities. The role of the Program includes the development of social services tailored to the needs and capabilities of people in the old age, ensuring adequate care for individuals showing less independence, using modern technologies to organize care for seniors, creating a support network for informal carers, integration in society, ensuring appropriate public service standards, increasing the quality of services for the society, increasing the effectiveness of the public service provision system, development and appropriate use of regional potentials, building conditions for the development of regional and local centers, as well as increasing potential of the cities (*ibidem*).

Beata Bugajska, Rafał Iwański, Marta Giezek, and Adam Ciemniak, when analyzing the senior policy of Szczecin, point to the need to expand the activities of various entities, full-time and part-time, supporting the elderly. Examples of recommendations include the development of the protected housing system, optimization of the day support centers, development of volunteering, development of environmental services, such as shopping or transport (Bugajska, Iwański, Giezek, & Ciemniak, 2017, p. 118).

Care over the elderly

Elderly care models include: “family care (of relatives and related), home care (informal – neighborhood, friends, privately paid people, non-governmental organizations), institutional care, including environmental care provided in the form of care services at home and the form of comprehensive services in a support facility (e.g. day-care nursing homes, self-help centers, a nursing home or support center), provided by qualified personnel” (Szarota, 2011, p. 19–20). Single people and those to whom the family is not able to provide appropriate assistance can count on care services provided by social assistance centers. Private companies and non-governmental organizations, in cooperation with these institutions, help people who cannot meet their own needs due to age, poor health or random situations. Caregivers perform tasks such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, washing, dressing, feeding, and dealing with various matters. These services also include specialist care for mentally ill people. The above-mentioned tasks are carried out in private homes for the charges (Krzyszowski, Skrzyński, & Kutyló, 2007, p. 37–38).

Social, economic and demographic factors reduce the caring potential of the family. Families have become less numerous, multigenerational occurrences are becoming less frequent, bonds have become weaker and contacts less intense. There is a high rate of economic emigration in our country, both abroad and in Poland. The number of close relatives who can take care of older family members is decreasing. The size

of the family, its structure and economic situation are indicators that determine the caring potential of the basic social cell. The decrease in the number of births in our country contributes to the fact that care tasks must be implemented to a greater extent by non-family institutions. It is also associated with the longer duration of human life and the increasing period of the dependence of the individual. In Poland, there is a widespread belief that it is the family that should take care of older people. The social and economic changes that took place significantly influenced the functioning and structure of the family. Unemployment or the pursuit of prosperity affects the decision to travel abroad for work purposes, and the increasing involvement of women in work reduces their ability to care for disabled relatives. An additional issue is that often disabled elderly require specialist care, which determines the need to use medical services (Hryniewicz, 2012, p. 12–13).

In the area of institutional assistance, the health care sector for people who are not able to meet their needs alone has allocated the following institutions: care and treatment facilities, upkeep and treatment facilities, hospices, palliative care departments, and departments for chronically ill (Bojanowska, 2012, p. 27).

Selected institutions supporting seniors

Daily support center

These facilities are intended for the elderly, are run to maintain the mental and physical fitness of seniors. Daily support centers are to create conditions for the longest possible functioning of units in their family and local environments. Thanks to these facilities, seniors meet the needs of contact with other people and integrate socially. Participants receive specialist support, social and facilitating rehabilitation, as well as various kinds of help and leisure activities. The elderly are referred to these centers based on a decision issued by social assistance centers. Interested people should contact the appropriate (depending on the place of residence) social assistance center. Then, the social worker carries out an environmental interview and completes the required documents – on this basis, the SAC issues a decision. The stay in day support centers is paid – the rules for determining payments are different in individual municipalities (Dąbrowska-Badula, 2011, p. 33–34).

Community self-help home

A support center is a form of semi-stationary assistance – it is an alternative solution for institutionalization. It provides an all-day stay with meals. This institution provides care, rehabilitation, recreational, cultural and educational services. It is intended for people suffering from various types of disabilities. Seniors who are not incapacitated, but feel lonely and deprived of family care may also benefit from the operation of the support center (Zych, 2010, p. 116).

The purpose of the work of the daycare home and community self-help home is to support the elderly and to dismiss the need to live in social care homes or nursing homes (Szarota, 2010, 246).

Social welfare home

Social welfare homes are “state budgetary establishments or private permanent residences, providing 24-hour, timely care to people who are not coping with the problems of the daily life on their own due to age, suffering from chronic somatic, mental illness, mental retardation or severe physical disability” (Szarota, 2004, p. 86).

Referral to the social welfare home requires the consent of the person being directed or his/her legal representative. In the case of incapacitated persons, the court's consent for the legal guardian to place the person in a social assistance home is additionally required. The court's consent also applies to situations when an individual needs help and his or her health condition does not allow to make such consent. During the proceedings, the following documents are obtained: environmental interview conducted by a social worker at the person's place of residence, photocopy of proof of receipt of a disability or old-age pension, health certificates, consent of the person concerned or his/her legal representative (or court order), consent to incur a fee for the stay, declaration of financial status, declaration of obtaining (or lack of) one-time income in the last year, opinion on psychophysical fitness, family environmental interview conducted on persons obliged to make the payment. After conducting the interview and completing the documents, a decision is issued to refer a person to the social welfare home of a given type (Dąbrowska-Badula, 2011, p. 28–29).

Care and treatment institution

The care and treatment institutions belong to the health sector – they do not belong to social assistance. Their benefits are provided both under the National Health Fund and for a fee. The institution offers medical and nursing services to those in need (Szarota, 2010, p. 258). The task of these facilities is to provide permanent or periodic care to patients who have undergone the “acute phase of hospital treatment”, have been diagnosed and do not require further hospitalization. The institution is intended for the sick, the disabled, whose health condition is “medium severe” and “very severe” (according to the Barthel scale). People who qualify for Social Assistance Homes or those whose main indication for assistance is the social situation or advanced cancer cannot go to these institutions. The care and treatment institution provides: medical and nursing care, rehabilitation, psychological help, occupational therapy, pharmacological and dietary treatment, medical products, specialist consultations, commissioned examinations, health education, necessary transport, as well as auxiliary measures (Informacja o wynikach kontroli funkcjonowania zakładów opiekuńczo-leczniczych, 2010, p. 5).

Recommendations for helping the oldest members of the society

The World Health Organization has established the following recommendations for assistance for aging and older people:

1. The elderly are the social group that is most susceptible to illness and chronic diseases. Therefore, it is necessary to organize a medical assistance system to assist seniors as effectively as possible. It should be part of general health protection and at the same time involve social assistance.

2. The diversity of seniors' diseases and specific features of their course and treatment are the justification for the functioning of geriatrics as a separate medical specialty.

3. There is a need to pay attention to the distribution of seniors in society. This applies to living in elderly homes and the design of separate homes. Placement of seniors must take into account their contact with peers and social integration.

4. Problems regarding work, employment, and retirement provision must be resolved, taking into account the rights of seniors to continue working after reaching retirement age and the right to retirement. In this respect, calendar age should not be taken as a determining factor.

5. Regarding the education and training of the elderly, there is often a problem of their retraining (in the event of a change of profession). Therefore, curricula for seniors should be created in such a way as to take into account their age-related needs and opportunities. There is a need in the education system to use different ways of passing on messages. Scientific and social research should take into account not only the elderly but also those in mid-adulthood because human aging is associated with its development in all stages preceding old age.

6. The state should ensure that free time is used by the aging population wisely. Efforts of social policy must focus on adequate organization of recreation for seniors, activities aimed at improving their physical and mental functioning, as well as developing social contacts.

7. It is necessary to take into account the adaptation to the needs of older people of public and national transport.

8. To properly take care of the needs of older people, emphasis should be placed on adequate preparation of social and medical workers (Zych, 2014, p. 78–80).

When looking after seniors, you need to take care of all their needs and approach the problem in many aspects. They must have adequate housing, livelihood, and adapted communication. Medical and social staff dealing with the elderly should have the best qualifications. Also, the free time of seniors is an important issue for the organization in such a way that their physical, mental and social development proceeds as favorably as possible.

The issue of old age and seniors is complicated, and in Poland, social policy towards these issues is not implemented sufficiently. The sooner and more positive

changes are made, the better it will be possible to deal with problems related to the aging of society. Particular attention should be paid to the following areas: diverse situation of seniors in terms of place of residence – region of the country (mainly eastern territories) and environment (urban or rural), diversity of situation due to age (it is necessary to appreciate the role of older men, the number of whom is much lower than of women), age of seniors (the likelihood of illness, disability and the need to provide care increases with age/increase in the number of years of life). You should also take into account: the living conditions and income of the elderly, as well as the type of household (single or multi-person), the family caring functions performed by the family for a disabled elderly person (support granted to the family in financial or material form or increasing care capital) and education of seniors, as well as people cooperating with them in matters of formal and informal activities (people working for the benefit of old people include, among others, social assistance and health care workers, clergy and volunteers) (Halicka, & Kramkowska, 2012, p. 49–50).

Referring to the WHO's indications, Elżbieta Mirewska writes that “a variety of environmental forms of senior care is being introduced. (...) Friendly conditions are created for easy access to long- and short-term care for the elderly in cases where the carer is unable to provide direct care and assistance. (...) A convenient space is being created for the development of self-help activities (...)” (Mirewska, 2016, p. 83). Institutions are developing in Poland which task is to support and help seniors. However, our country faces many challenges to help the elderly satisfyingly and skillfully (Nowik, 2016, p. 202).

Conclusion

The negative effects of aging are often emphasized – the increasing number of elderly and sick people raises the need for the increased financial outlays on care, medical assistance as well as retirement and disability benefits. However, one should not forget how valuable elderly people are in society. They share their knowledge and experience with the young, and, to the best of their abilities, they help and support their loved ones, which is irreplaceable.

Social, demographic and cultural changes affect the situation of older people. Their lives in previous development periods and what they gave to others – whether they offered their time, support, kindness, help – is of great importance.

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The demographic barriers of economic development in Poland, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by 2035 – the comparative analysis

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Keywords: aging, demographic tendencies, economic development, former-Soviet republics, old population, pension schemes, sustainable growth

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of demographic tendencies on the long-term economic development in selected former-Soviet republics (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan), and Poland by 2035. In light of the constant increase in the number of population in Central Asian countries by then, their sustainable growth seems to be stable in the following decades. However, the forecasts either for Azerbaijan or Poland are far less propitious. Therefore, it is particularly necessary to study the last reforms of pensions scheme there and compare their efficiency to the systems that either have already been established in Kazakhstan or are in an ongoing stadium in Uzbekistan. Hence, the in-depth analyses of all chosen countries either from demographic or economic perspectives should answer the question, whether the aging population may harm their long-term development in the assumed timeline.

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, almost every of its newly emerged former republics has implemented unique approaches regarding the social protection of retired people. However, it is difficult to judge if the efficient combination of social policy reforms has already been recognized in the aforementioned region by the local policymakers. According to Rajabov (2016), still profoundly Sovietized economies found themselves under the conditions of arising free-market, as fragile and unstable during the first decade after 1991. Simultaneously new republics in Central Europe

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that were under the strict influence of the USSR since the end of World War II appeared. Over the years after its downfall in 1991, many of them joined the EU. It had an extensive impact on their institutional framework and integration with Western European countries. Among them, Poland has the most populous society and the largest economy (World Bank 2019).

Nonetheless, since the very beginning of the 21st-century, when the global market prices for the raw materials had risen significantly, the economic growth in some post-soviet countries remarkably increased. Among success stories, it is necessary to indicate the examples of Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and to a lesser extent Uzbekistan. Every one of them largely compounded their spendings on a boost of their social development indicators. However, the sub-prime crisis that dramatically destabilized the international financial market after 2007, exposed their reliance on the demand capabilities in developed countries.

Notwithstanding in this research paper, Russia that Goldman Sachs included in the BRIC acronym in 2004 (O'Neill, 2005) is not taken into account. The author tries to examine the successful policies that have recently been implemented to promote the development, in the light of the aging-population problem, in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. To make this case comprehensive, it is needful to present a comparative study with the CEE region representative. Considering the dynamic of growth since 1991, GDP per capita change in current USD (World Bank 2019) and the pace of demographic alteration, Poland pretends to be a well-adjusted example.

This paper proceeds as follows: after an introduction, the second section concentrates on the theory of economic development in light of the aging population. The third section describes the pension systems in the selected countries. The fourth section outlines the growth tendencies and the main barriers to sustainable development that result from demographic decline. The end section concludes the results of the study and highlights the scope for further research.

Literature review

There is no doubt that the relation between aging of the population and its impact on the long-term, sustainable growth of the country highly depends on its stage of development. The developed countries' societies have been getting significantly older for decades. As the main arguments that enhance this tendency could be considered either dramatically decreasing in birth rates or steadily rising life expectancy rate within them (on the purpose of this research OECD members represent this group) (World Bank 2019). Therefore, those societies work on average significantly longer than employees in the former soviet states (Eurostat 2018). Hence, it is essential to present the theoretical framework of this phenomenon that has been discussed by researchers hitherto.

The research paper prepared by Prettner (2013) claims that in the endogenous model of growth, the one based on the principal assumptions of Romer's fundamental study

(1990), thrives on thanks to the demographic processes. As of its result, the number of investments in R&D increases, as well as the long-run economic growth perspectives of industrialized countries. Although in Prettner's viewpoint, the aging of the population is beneficial for the long-run economic growth. However, it is solely on the condition that the negative results of the decreases in fertility are overcompensated by the outcomes of reductions in mortality.

Prettner's study could be supplemented by the exploration conducted by Nagarajan, Teixeira, and Silva (2013). To conclude their examination: aging of the population has improved the economic growth of developed countries, but at the same time an obstacle has never seen in the past has occurred. As a result, aging influences might be considered a new experience for the world. Furthermore, Muggeridge's (2015) geographic input to this study is also meaningful. He underlines there that only the more economically developed regions (countries) have potentially benefited from population aging when less developed ones have not. Finally, the research of Maresova, Mohaleska, and Kuca (2015) pays attention to the changing market trends related to the steadily rising health expenditure, and business opportunities in that context, regarding European Union countries since 2011.

On the contrary to above-presented opinions is the paper prepared by Maestas, Mullen, and Powell (2016). Their findings reveal that between 1980, and 2010 GDP per capita in the US decreased by 9.2% as a result of the population aging (the share of older people increased by 16.8% in the same period). Another significant remark from this research exposes the subsequent influence of an increasing number of elderlies on economic growth in the following decade. Between 2020-2030 the older population share will rise by 11% what should negatively affect the future annual economic growth of 0,6 percentage points therein the US. This viewpoint is bolstered either by data presented in Guarino's article (2018). Similar concerns highlight Devictor (2012) in his study. He examines there that the main hurdle for the sustainable development of Poland is its quickly aging population. If that tendency maintained until 2020, the average annual GDP per capita growth would fell from 4,7% (2011–2020) to around 3% between 2021–2030.

To conclude this section, it is necessary to highlight the results of the analysis pursued by Sukpaiboonwat, Plyngam, and Jaroensathapornkul (2014), who based their investigation on the experiences of High Performing Asian Economic countries. Further, they emphasize that older residents can contribute to economic growth because of knowledge transfer. Therefore, the learning of younger from the elderly population experience is the essential success to develop their skills. This observation is particularly valuable if taken into account how older people are traditionally respected in Asian societies.

The structure of retirement systems in selected countries

Polish retirement system characterized as a defined benefit (DB) pay-as-to-go scheme before 1999. Wong (2015), describes it as a plan in which the current pension welfare of the elderly is financed by a contribution from the current working population. Moreover, this pension model was inherited by all post-Soviet states after the collapse of the USSR in 1991 (Grishchenko, 2015).

Nonetheless, the Polish government decided to dramatically change the internal structure of the pension scheme and make it more diversified. Since then, it is based on the three-pillar system. The first one persisted as a defined contribution scheme, based on the Social Insurance Fund, and led by the Social Management Institution. The second pillar was based on open pension funds that were managed by the private fund managers. The third pillar consists of the voluntarily paid funds, which include for example Personal Voluntary Plans, Individual Pensions Insurance Accounts, or Voluntarily Occupational Pensions Plans (Leszko, Lamparska, Trempala, 2015).

Since 2014 the participation in the first two pillars was mandatory and amounted proportionally for 12.22%, and 7.3% of gross wages. However, the previous ruling power decided to weaken the capital pillar and redirect the larger volume of compulsory contribution toward the Social Management Institution, and to take over 51.5% of its assets. After the reform, the number of capital inflows to the second pillar has significantly decreased (around 0.2 percent GDP), but the share of assets that preserves under its control remains still noteworthy (around 8 percent GDP) (Łaszek, 2019).

Notwithstanding the implementation of the subsequent modernization to the Polish pension system, its efficiency has been remarkably declining for years. According to the data annually presented by OECD (2017), the gross pension replacement rate has fallen between 2014, and 2017 from 43.1% in general to 31.6% for men, and 27.9% for women. This negative change might be influenced by the reduction of the long-term planned retirement age (in 2015) from 67 years old in general (set in 2013) to 65 years old for men and 60 years old for women (as one of the very few countries in the world). To reverse this negative tendency, the current government decided to introduce the Employees Capital Pension Scheme from the 1st of July 2019. Their main goal is to encourage employees to voluntarily pay between 2–4% of their gross salaries on top of their obligatory monthly payments. Together, the employer is obliged to pay up to 4% of the employee's wage into the retirement scheme (Barteczko, 2018).

To sum up this subsection, it is necessary to present the predicted structure of the Polish retirement system in 2020. Biskupski (2019) claims that the second pillar, in its current shape, is going to be eliminated until then. As a result, the pension system will consist of: defined contribution scheme, employee capital pensions scheme and voluntarily paid funds. The number of assets, that is still accumulated in the remov-

ing Open Pension Funds, amount to 36.95 billion euros². Moreover, its number of shareholders equals to 15.8 million Polish citizens. They will be able to decide whether their accumulated assets so far should be transferred to the first pillar or the third one. The government anticipates that around 80% of Poles will choose the second option. As a consequence, the state budget is going to earn an additional 4.4 billion Euro³ by 2021, as the transformation fee amounts to 15% of the total value of owned assets by individual participants (Bankier, 2019).

The scheme described above has been considered as well working pattern in many post-Soviet republics for years. Analyzing pension systems there, it seems that the most courageous model has steadily been developing in Kazakhstan since 1998. Comparing its exact structure to the aforementioned instance of Poland, it is possible to identify notable similarities between them. As one of the most outstanding examples could be acknowledged the decision to leave an inefficient PAYG model and replace it with a more diversified paradigm based on the three pillars (following the main assumptions of the Chilean model, that was introduced in 1980 there).

Nonetheless, the Kazakh government also decided to increase the retirement age from 55 to 58 years for women and from 60 to 63 for men. According to Buribayev, Mukaldyeva, Nurahmetova, Uteyev, Nessipbekov, and Khamzina (2016), the in-depth reforms implemented in 1998 were only the beginning for the general reorganization of the entire pension system in Kazakhstan that first phase ended only in 2013. Its positive outcomes are presented in his research paper by Belanovsky (2014). The value of minimal pension between 2000-2011 increased sevenfold (to 163 USD), the average one rose eightfold (to 246 USD) and the maximum one changed by 640% (to 355 USD). Nowadays, the Kazakh pension system mainly consists of universal, mandatory and voluntary pillars.

Citing Maltseva and Janenova (2018), the zero pillar comprises of the basic social pension. All citizens who entered a personal age, have a right to participate in its payments. In 2018 the minimum base pensions amounted \$45 what corresponds to 54% of the minimum subsistence level (MSL) in Kazakhstan. The first pillar is based on an obligatory individual account defined contribution of a 10 % rate for workers. The second pillar, previously based on the solidarity pension scheme, has consequently been substituting for the voluntary pension scheme of the United Pension Fund that was set in 2013 (current third pillar). Nevertheless, until its phase-out around 2030, the PAYG pension will continue to be paid as long as there are still workers or pensioners with at least six months of employment before January 1998. The second pillar contains also a compulsory contribution for workers employed

2 Own calculation of an exchange rate on the basis of National Polish Bank data. Retrieved from <https://www.nbp.pl>

3 Own calculation of an exchange rate on the basis of National Polish Bank data. Retrieved from <https://www.nbp.pl>

in high-risk professions, with a contribution rate of 5% paid by employers. To start obtaining the pension transfer from all pillars, it is necessary to prove at least 10 years of professional activity, and the real participation in making a contribution to the Pension Funds.

Probably, from 2020 on, an additional notional defined contribution pension financed through a contribution rate of 5% paid by employers is going to be implemented. All of these reforms should ensure the replacement rate at the level of at least 40% and above in the future decades. Today, the old-age replacement rate is around 53% (191 EUR⁴ to 358 EUR⁵). However, if taking into account only the full employment rate of 25 years for men and 20 years for women, it accounts for 60% and may increase 1% for every additional year up to 75%. The retirement age is still 58 years for women and 63 years for men, but between 2018–2027, this age will gradually level off at 63 years for both sexes (Egemen Qazaqstan, 2018).

Between 2001–2017 a similar pension scheme existed in Azerbaijan. It was an effect of tight cooperation between the local government and International Organizations, which suggested the adoption of a 3-tier pension system. In the final version, it was expected to consist of the PAYG component, an additional mandatory insurance part, and a third voluntary scheme. Social protection became the main development priority for the authorities shortly after the sudden rise of strategic fossil fuel prices on the international market at the beginning of the 2000s. This inflow of foreign capital enlarged state budget reserves and fostered the restoration of the entire local social policy. It was needful because the first years after regaining independence in 1991 characterized by economic downturn and uncertainty. Despite plentiful natural resources almost half of society lived in inadequate conditions before (ILO, 2016).

Investigating the structure of discussed reform its elements were executed gradually. Since 2006, the second pillar (notional defined contribution) was officially brought into existence altogether with the introduction of individual accounts. It is fully financed either by employees who are obliged to pay 3% monthly of their gross salaries, or employers with a contribution of 22% of payroll. In the case of the basic pension, its value profoundly corresponds to the minimum standard and progress to reach progressively the subsistence minimum for the people who are unable to work (Bitinas, 2018). From 1st March 2019, its value was raised by 38,5% from 61,24 EUR to 84.46 EUR⁶. The base pension is provided by the government to only those who worked at least 12 years and are in retirement age (similar requirement as in Kazakhstan). The residuary amount

4 Own calculation on the basis of Kazakhstan data. Retrieved from <http://en.egemen.kz/article/188704-the-average-pension-is-82-thousand-tenge-in-kazakhstan> and National Bank of Kazakhstan data. Retrieved from <https://nationalbank.kz>

5 Own calculation on the basis of Azernews data. Retrieved from <https://www.azernews.az/region/133417.html> and National Bank of Kazakhstan data, access: <https://nationalbank.kz>

6 Own calculation on the basis of Azernews data. Retrieved from <https://www.azernews.az/business/146969.html> and Central Bank of Azerbaijan. Retrieved from <https://www.cbar.az>

depends on the transferred savings to the individual account (Verulava, 2018). The third pillar was never physically implemented.

Consequently, in 2017 an amendment to the current pension system that officially transited the previous three pillars system to a two-stage one was enacted. In consequence, nowadays the old-age pension consists only of an insurance component and voluntary contribution funded by the individual itself. The base component was removed from the pension scheme. Same as in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijani officials are consequently increasing the minimum limit of old-age pension. Currently, men acquire it upon completion of the age of 64 years and women of 61 years. However, it was the government decision (contained in the amendment) to equal the pension age for both sexes at the level of 65 years old. As a result, it will be respectively reached by men in 2021, and by women in 2027 (CESD Research Group: 2017). Today, the replacement rate is computed by around 41% (126,66 EUR⁷ to 308,66 EUR⁸).

The only country presenting in these papers, that has never updated its pensions scheme and is still fully-based on the PAYG structure is Uzbekistan. The main reason for preserving this outdated structure was an outstandingly positive demographic tendency between 1991–2017. According to the data collected by The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2017), the number of local citizens increased then by 11,5 million people, or 55,9 % (from 20,61 million to 32,12 million). Nonetheless, the percentage of elderly persons has been consequently raising, and it is supposed that it will reach the level of 11% by 2025 (what is still much less than in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and especially Poland). In comparison, based on the research of Off-budgetary Pension Fund (2018), in 2011 old-aged part of the society stood barely at 6,2%. Moreover, the retirement age in Uzbekistan begins after approaching 60 years old by men and 55 years by women (with at least 7 years of actual employment). These figures, to cite Dosmuhametova (2018), are the lowest among CIS countries.

To face the demographic transition that seems to be inevitable, the recently presented project of the social policy improvement assumes the increase of retirement age for both sexes to relatively 63 years for men and 58 years for women in 2023. Furthermore, the minimum needed age of active professional engagement should not be lower than 10 years until then (Rachmatova, 2019). Today, the resources of Off-budgetary Pension Fund that is responsible for every pension transfers are based on inflows from fixed revenue from the Single social payment (25% of the wages fund is paid by legal entities and 15% for small firms), citizens' insurance payments (7% of individuals' salaries); mandatory payments (1,6% of the sales revenue of goods) (Ra-

7 Own calculation on the basis of Azernews data. Retrieved from <https://www.azernews.az/nation/140478.html> and Central Bank of Azerbaijan. Retrieved from <https://www.cbar.az>

8 Own calculation on the basis of CEIC data. Retrieved from <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/azerbaijan/average-monthly-salary-statistical-classification-of-economic-activities-rev-2/average-monthly-salary> and Central Bank of Azerbaijan. Retrieved from <https://www.cbar.az>

khmonov, 2016). According to the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2018), the old-age replacement rate is significantly lower than in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and amounted to 36,6% in 2017 (51,44 EUR to 140,32 EUR)⁹.

Despite the fact that the percentage of elderly persons will slightly increase until 2035 (from around 9% today to 12,65% then), their total number will raise almost about 55% from 3,2 million today to 4,94 million then¹⁰. The total population of the country is going to reach a level of 39 million¹¹ inhabitants until 2035. Hence, the implementation of pension reforms is one of the crucial challenges for the current government. It is assumed that the future pension scheme is going to be modeled on the elements successfully executed so far in Poland, Czech Republic, South Korea and Russia (Rachmatova, 2019).

To summarize this section, it is necessary to compare the demographic tendencies based on the data presented earlier in this paper. Nowadays, the most populated country remains Poland nonetheless its number of inhabitants will be steadily shrinking in the next 15 years, from 37,85 million today to 36,18 in 2035. At the same time, the reverse trend should be observed either in Uzbekistan (from 33,47 million to 39,07) or Kazakhstan (from 18,78 million to 21,48). The most unchangeable situation is going to be kept in Azerbaijan (chart 1).

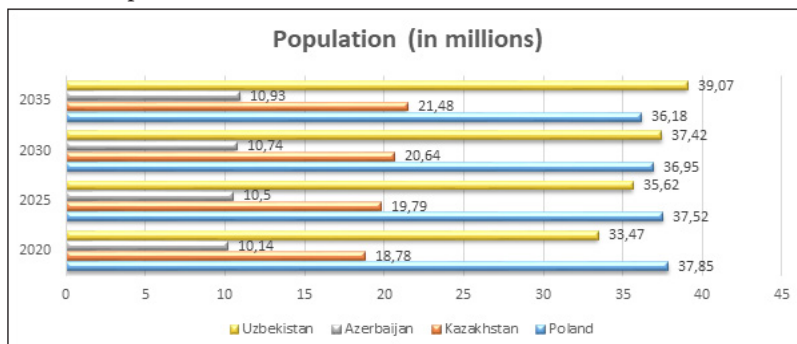
As a result of the low fertility rate in Poland, there is a high likelihood that almost the third part of that society will consist of people aged 60 and above until 2035 (chart no. 2). In described in this paper former-soviet states, these numbers are going to be demographically more hopeful, but the steady aging of the society will be observed there as well. In Uzbekistan, the number of elderly persons should not exceed 13% (8,3% today) of the population by 2035, but in Kazakhstan, this variable will likely increase from 12,2% today to 16,4%, and in Azerbaijan from 11,6% now to 18,7% by then. The above-mentioned fertility rate is going to remain over two births per woman only in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by 2035. Nevertheless, in both cases, there will be seen a decreasing tendency in this term (more in chart no. 3).

9 Own calculation on the basis of State Budget data p. 80. Retrieved from https://www.mf.uz/media/file/state-budget/pub/budjet_for_citizens.pdf and Central Bank of Uzbekistan. Retrieved from <https://nbu.uz/>

10 Own calculation on the basis of United Nation data. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

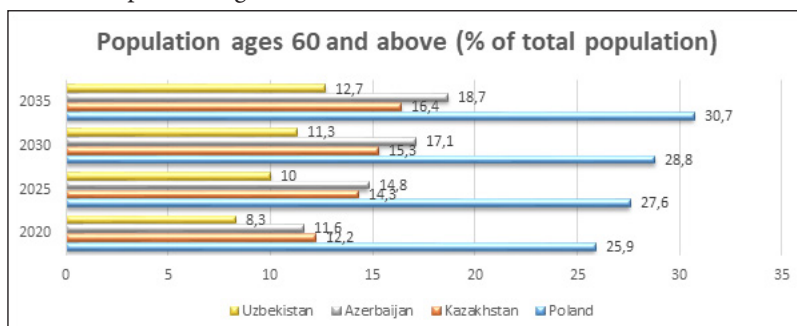
11 Own calculation on the basis of United Nation data. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

Chart 1: Population between 2020–2035



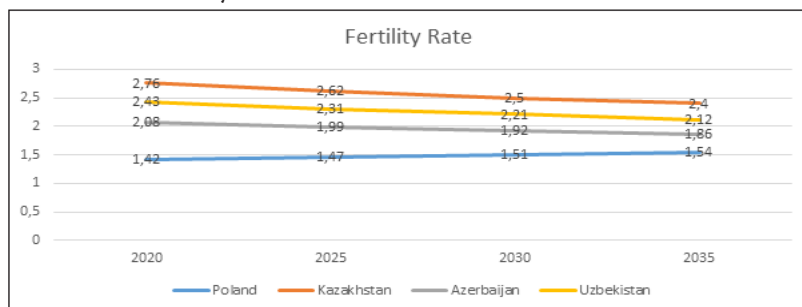
Source: Own counting based on United Nations database: <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

Chart 2: Population ages 60 and above 2020–2035



Source: Own counting based on United Nations database: <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

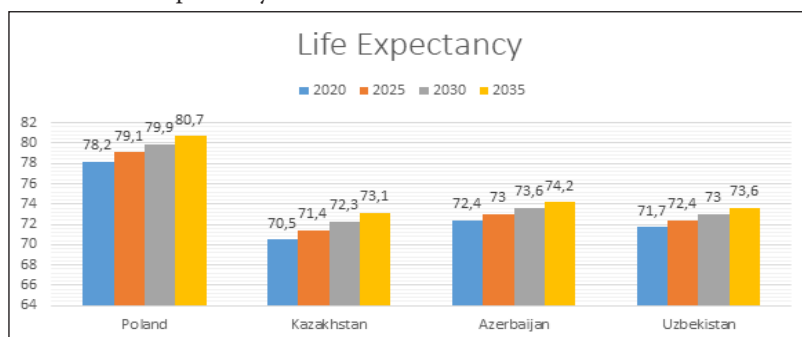
Chart 3: The Fertility Rate 2020–2035



Source: Own counting based on United Nations database: <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

Analyzing data regarding life expectancy (chart no. 4), and retirement age (Table 1), there are no doubts that people are going to live longer in each of the investigated countries. Therefore, the local governments are somehow compelled to implement structural reforms and seek new opportunities to diversify the structure of capital inflows to cover unwaveringly rising budget spendings on retiree maintenance. Hence, it seems to be evident that the responsibility for the final amount of pension payment should both depend upon the state and the citizen. As a result of PAYG pension scheme, still working in Uzbekistan, becomes less useful than ever before.

Chart 4: Life Expectancy 2020–2035



Source: Own counting based on United Nations database: <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

Table 1: Retirement conditions in selected countries

	Poland	Azerbaijan	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Russia
Replacement rate (average for both sexes, %)	29,75	41	53	36,6	36
The pension age for men	65	64	63	60	60
The pension age for women	60	61	58	55	55
The average pension wage (in EUR)	492,7	126,7	191	51,44	196,67

Source: Own calculation based on data from Azerbaijan Ministry of Finance, The Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan, The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics, GUS, Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

How old-aging may affect sustainable economic growth in investigated countries.

The second decade of the 21st-century could be characterized by stability and positive economic performance in most of the described countries here. The highest development and sustainability have been exposed by the macroeconomic figures related to the Polish economy (table 2). Between 2010–2018 its average annual GDP growth amounts to 3,53% and reaches an even higher level of 3,59% in per capita terms. Respectively the GDP per capita expressed in current USD has raised about 18%, from 12 600 USD to 15 424 USD then. In 2018 the number of citizens was almost similar as in 2010 (from 38,04 to 37,88 million inhabitants¹²). As a result, the inflation as GDP deflator barely suppressed 1% on average and amounted to 1,36% then.

Table 2: Poland Economic Outlook 2010–2018

Poland	GDP growth (annual %)	GDP per capita growth (annual %)	Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)	GDP per capita (current US\$)
2010	3,61	3,9	1,66	12 600
2011	5,02	4,96	3,23	13 894
2012	1,61	1,61	2,35	13 146
2013	1,39	1,45	0,29	13 781
2014	3,32	3,4	0,5	14 348
2015	3,84	3,91	0,77	12 572
2016	3,06	3,11	0,31	12 432

12 Own calculation based on World Bank Database: Retrieved. from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2018&locations=UZ-AZ-KZ-PL&start=2010>

2017	4,81	4,8	1,98	13 861
2018	5,15	5,14	1,14	15 424
Average/ Change	3,53	3,59	1,36	22%

Source: Own calculation based on World Bank database

However, the forecast presented by Devictor (Section II) assumed even better performance. Furthermore, the growth perspectives for the coming decade (2021–2030) should be even worse than the figures achieved by the Polish economy so far. Either the decreasing number of population (from current 37,88 to 36,95 million in 2030 or still rising amount of elderly persons (from 25,9% of the total population now to 28,8% in 2030, successfully diminishing the growth potential of the country. Therefore it is expected that the old-age dependency ratio will increase from 28,4 at the beginning of 2020 to 37 in 2030¹³. If the old-age minimum pension age does not raise soon, Poland will face the significant problem of pension scheme inefficiency.

Among selected for this examination former-soviet states, Kazakhstan noted the most predictable development during the last decade. Its average GDP growth between 2010–2018 amounted to almost 4,5% when the number of citizens rose by nearly 2 million (from 16,32 to 18,28 million¹⁴). Hence, the growth per capita was respectively lower and calculated at 3%. Nevertheless, the analysis of inflation rate change at the same time reveals economic volatility in the analyzed period. What is more, the inflation as GDP deflator was sharply shifting from 1,82% to even 20,54% then, and its average value amounted to 10%. As an effect, the GDP per capita expressed in current USD has almost not changed and rose only by 3% between 2010-2018 (more detailed macroeconomic statistics in table 3).

Table 3: Kazakhstan Economic Outlook 2010–2018

Kazakhstan	GDP growth (annual %)	GDP per capita growth (annual %)	Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)	GDP per capita (current US\$)
2010	7,3	5,79	19,54	9 070
2011	7,4	5,87	20,54	11 634
2012	4,8	3,33	4,79	12 387
2013	6	4,49	9,5	13 891
2014	4,2	2,68	5,77	12 807

13 Own calculation based on United Nations database, access: <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

14 Own calculation based on World Bank database, access: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2018&locations=KZ&start=2010>

2015	1,2	-0,27	1,82	10 511
2016	1,1	-0,33	13,64	7 715
2017	4,1	2,69	8,6	9 030
2018	4,1	2,74	6,35	9 331
Average/ Change	4,47	3,00	10,06	3%

Source: Own calculation based on the World Bank database.

Taking into account the fact that the economic uncertainty in Kazakhstan depended either on the volatile prices of crude oil or the internal political reconstruction since 2010, the near future in terms of demography looks long-range. Having the highest fertility rate in studied countries (see chart 3), the number of inhabitants tends to exceed 20 million in 2030. Moreover, the percentage of the population ages 60 and above is going to increase slowly and will reach only around 16,5% by 2035. Consequently, the old-age dependency ratio will augment from 12,6 to 18,3%¹⁵ by then. In Poland, that indicator will be almost twofold higher. What is more, the Kazakh pension scheme has consequently been reforming for over 20 years and seems to be well-matched to the social demographic structure soon.

Azerbaijan, as the country that highly depends on the price of fossil fuels (same as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan), is the only example used in this research that's real economy shrunk in assuming timeline. GDP per capita expressed in USD was 19% lower in 2018 than in 2010. Furthermore, the percentage of GDP hardly raised (only by 0,28%) when the number of citizens augmented by around 1 million people (from 9,05 to 9,94 million¹⁶). GDP's average annual growth was estimated at 1,46% then. As in Kazakhstan, local citizens have encountered essential price fluctuations since 2010. Even though the average inflation as GDP deflator amounted to the figure of 8,31% between 2010-2018, its marginal values varied from -8,81% to 24,61% (more detailed macroeconomic statistics are collected in table 4).

Table 4: Azerbaijan Economic Outlook 2010–2018

Azerbaijan	GDP growth (annual %)	GDP per capita growth (annual %)	Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)	GDP per capita (current US\$)
2010	4,79	3,55	13,83	5 843
2011	-1,57	-2,85	24,61	7 190

15 Own calculation based on United Nations database. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

16 Own calculation based on World Bank database Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2018&locations=AZ&start=2010>

2012	2,2	0,85	2,85	7 496
2013	5,84	4,48	0,41	7 876
2014	2,8	1,52	-1,33	7 891
2015	1,05	-0,15	-8,81	5 500
2016	-3,06	-4,14	14,63	3 881
2017	-0,28	-1,26	16,73	4 147
2018	1,41	0,51	11,87	4 721
Average/ Change	1,46	0,28	8,31	-19%

Source: Own calculation based on the World Bank database.

The demographic investigation does not reveal any significant capacity and exhibits Azerbaijan as a country that is gradually going to become more similar to Poland and other European countries than Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan in a number of birth per woman. The fertility rate will be continuously decreasing and should reach 1,86 (2,08 today) in 2035. Moreover, either the percentage of elderly persons may increase from 11,6% to 18,7% in 2035, or the old-age dependency ratio from 9,7% to 19,9%¹⁷ at the same time. Consequently, from this viewpoint, the amendment implemented to the pension scheme in 2017 looks like the necessary upgrade. As of its result, the main financial burden related to the future pensions scheme maintenance should be redirected from the government to citizens in the coming decades.

Since the death of President Islam Karimov in 2016, Uzbekistan is undergoing meaningful modernization of the entire state that reflects its reorientation from an inward-looking, insulated economy to the open market version. Between 2010-2018 GDP average annual overall growth was estimated at 7% and 5% in per capita terms (ones of the highest in Asia). Although its GDP per capita expressed in USD has regularly declined for the last three years (from 2 615 USD in 2015 to 1 532 USD in 2018), the annual growth of Uzbekistan fell under 5% only once between 2010–2018 (in 2017). In 2010 this variable amounted to 1 377 USD. Furthermore, as the most populated community in Central Asia, with a promising tendency for future proliferation, the number of Uzbeks enlarged from 28,56 to 32,96 million at the same time¹⁸. The only barrier that could hamper the country's sustainable development in the fol-

17 Own calculation based on United Nations database. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

18 Own calculation based on World Bank database, Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2018&locations=UZ&start=2010>

lowing decade is high inflation. Its average rate amounted to 18,4% in the assuming period (table 4).

Table 5: Uzbekistan Economic Outlook 2010–2018

Uzbekistan	GDP growth (annual %)	GDP per capita growth (annual %)	Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)	GDP per capita (current US\$)
2010	8,48	5,46	16,48	1 377
2011	8,28	5,41	16,59	1 565
2012	8,18	6,6	14,93	1 740
2013	8,03	6,35	14,25	1 908
2014	7,18	5,39	36,76	2 492
2015	7,45	5,59	10,42	2 615
2016	6,09	4,27	8,75	2 568
2017	4,46	2,72	19,43	1 827
2018	5,13	3,33	28,12	1 532
Average/ Change	7,03	5,01	18,41	11%

Source: Own calculation based on the World Bank database.

Uzbekistan is going to accommodate around 39 million people by 2035, 12,7% of which will be perceived as elderly ones (only 8,3% today). Although the fertility rate will be continuously shrinking in the following 15 years (from 2,43 to 2,12), the old-age dependency ratio should not exceed 12,5% then¹⁹. Having a populous and young society, Uzbekistan will have an encouraging environment for an occurrence of long-term, sustainable development soon. Furthermore, despite the promising demographic conditions, the local ruling power is already seeking an opportunity to improve the living standard of old-aged persons. Accordingly, the government found it necessary to implement a modern, multi-pillar pension scheme that will successfully replace the currently working, outdated PAYG system.

Discussion

Explaining the above-obtained results of this research, that seems to be necessary to link investigated countries with their current stage of the Demographic Transition Model. Taking into account the effects presented in his research by Grover (2014),

¹⁹ Own calculation based on United Nations database, Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>

it is possible to assign the above-described cases to three different groups. Current demographic trends in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan classify them to be in turn from 2nd to the 3rd stage (out of five) that characterizes by a low death rate and a significant decrease in birth rates. It means that the local authorities have already provided significant improvements in healthcare, education system and food and sanitation infrastructure. Nonetheless, the fertility rate in both countries is gradually declining (chart 3). Therefore, lower birth rates combined with low death rates will slow the pace of their overall population growth after an expected transformation to Stage 3 what should happen there until 2035.

On another hand, citing the World Bank report prepared by Bussolo, Koettl, and Sinnott (2015) is the fact that demographic alteration in former-Soviet states is occurring differently than in developed countries. Therefore, the rise in average age in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is mostly attributable to low and declining fertility rates rather than to increases in longevity. Nevertheless, this same source defines the Kazakh pension scheme as the only one within Central Asian states with a low risk of higher poverty among elderly persons.

Azerbaijan, considering as one of the fastest-growing former-Soviet states in the first decade of the 21st century might be included in the 3rd stage group of countries in Glover classification. Notwithstanding, there are still essential uncertainties regarding the economic, social or political stability. The last decade exposed the dramatic dependence of the development of the country on fossil fuel prices. Therefore, it is challenging to consider Azerbaijan as the state that reassures decent living conditions to its citizens. On another hand, anticipated stabilization in terms of population number contributes significant advantages for a country, giving opportunities to strengthen its economy as a prominent number of its citizens will be in their working age. To achieve the 4th stage by 2035, Azerbaijan will be obliged to be attributed in an efficient and diversified economy, educated population, widely-available healthcare and augmented employment opportunities for women.

The pace of Poland's development after 1989²⁰ resembles in many aspects the trends that were presented by countries as Germany, Netherlands or France between 1960 (the beginning of the post-war economic boom) and 1990²¹. Nevertheless, Poland has never been a recipient of mass inflows of emigrants from post-colonial countries. There are doubts that their arrival to Western European countries after World War II had a positive influence on the change of diminishing fertility rate, observed within

20 Own calculation based on World Bank database. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2018&locations=PL&start=1990>

21 Own calculation based on World Bank database. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=1990&locations=NL-DE-FR&start=1960>

its native citizens²². Therefore, Poland experiences loss to the overall population today, mainly due to one of the lowest fertility rates in the entire EU and a negative rate of natural increase (the number of deaths exceeds the number of births). Regarding Grover order, Poland shall be considered as a member of the last, 5th stage group of the countries. However, real economic performance and negative long-term net migration rate complicate the final assessment of this specific case.

Conclusions

Through the examination of selected variables and indicators related to the aging of populations in Poland, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, I intended to determine the trends in demographic performance of selected nations and barriers for their long-term development by 2035. As the research reveals, the youngest societies are currently in Central Asian countries that either has built an efficient pension scheme despite the relatively low number of pensioners (Kazakhstan) or are in the process of its reconstruction (Uzbekistan). Therefore, they seem to be prepared for the demographic transition that is going to begin there in the future. If they maintain their integration with the global market (especially Uzbekistan), it is feasible that their positive growth trend will be kept in the following decades as well.

The forecast for Azerbaijan's development implies less propitious economic performance today. On the one hand, the number of its inhabitants will almost not changed by 2035. On another one, it might be a fabulous opportunity to diversify its economy and focus on the industries that are more knowledgeable than resource-based. Furthermore, the pension system without the base component that was removed in 2017 redirects the principal responsibility for pension payments on society. As a result, it might be a beginning for its transformation into the 4th stage country according to Glover classification.

The less optimistic demographic estimation concerns Poland. Being one of the fastest aging populations in Europe, it is difficult to assess whether the last reforms will be enough to input profound change into the entire pension scheme. The reduction of the retirement age from 67 years in general to 65 years for men and 60 for women does not indicate the positive demographic transformation even in the medium-term. Moreover, the fertility rate will probably not increase considerably by years, hence without the massive immigration, the number of the Polish population is going to shrink dramatically in the following decades. If this tendency is going to be upheld, the assuming catching-up of the developed countries could never happen.

22 Own calculation based on World Bank database. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2018&locations=NL-DE-FR-PL&start=1960>

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Things and space in old age and an ageing society

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Key words: old age, gerontotechnologies, long-term care

Abstract

Poland belongs to the group of countries in which the ageing process of the population has taken on a very violent dimension. Demographic forecasts indicate that the population of Poland in the middle of the 21st century will be one of the oldest in the group of European Union countries. The ageing of the population is a challenge, not only for the seniors themselves, but also for the whole society. Minimizing the negative effects of the ageing process requires undertaking actions in various areas of social policy in order to prepare for an increase in the number of elderly people with a simultaneous decrease in the number of people at pre-age and working age. The aim of the article is to present the impact and significance of objects and space in which seniors function on the life of older people. The ageing process of the population forces the adoption of measures aimed at adapting the private and public environment to the needs of seniors, in particular people with reduced ability to self-care and self-care. The article uses data from the GUS, NFZ, EC, MRPiPS and the results of the author's own research.

Introduction

A human needs various objects to survive and develop at every stage of his life. It is similar with the third and fourth stage² of a person's life. At this stage the needs in

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2 Until recently there were three main stages of life distinguished: childhood and early adulthood, adulthood and old age. It is currently considered whether to introduce the fourth category: longevity, for people over 90/100 years of age. The introduction of a

terms of objects change from large and expensive (a car, a television, a house with a garden) to little and uncomplicated ones (such as a cane or a diaper). At other times, these are the things necessary for creating and functioning of a large amount of factors of production, e.g. hospitals, public transport, etc. The things might become causative agents in the educational process (Makowska, 2018), but they also may be relevant in the process of preparation for old age. It is worth initiating a reflection on whether we are able to age well³ and eliminate negative aspects of ageing on individual and social level, without having regard to the environment we are associated with and things that accompany us in everyday life.

The main goal of the paper is to present what influence and importance the things and space have on the life of older people. Ageing population requires to take measures that eliminate to the greatest extent the negative effects of this process, i.a. social exclusion and marginalization, loss of ability to lead an independent existence, etc. In the case of older people, the exclusion might occur due to the loss of ability to use and operate common, standardized objects (Krajewski, 2008). The main area of interest in the paper revolves around issues connected with securing the needs of older people who have limited ability to live independently on a daily basis. The examples of good practice regarding the adjustment of private space (apartments, nursing homes) and public space (blocks of flats, districts, cities) to the needs of ageing society were presented. Also, the data used in the study come from Central Statistical Office (GUS), National Health Fund (NFZ), European Commission, The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (MRPiPS) and the results of author's own studies.

The old age is coming

Polish society is ageing. Since the beginning of the 1940s we have observed very low birth rates at the level of 1.3 – 1.4 children per woman of child-bearing age (GUS, 2018). We live longer. In 1970 life expectancy for a woman amounted to 73.3 years, and in 2017 it increased to 81.1 years. A similar increase is noted for men. In 1970 it was 66.6 years, and in 2017 – 74 years (GUS, 2017). Also, strong permanent external migration trends continue. Since Polish membership in the EU, it is estimated that 2.4 million people have left the country (GUS, 2018).

These figures clearly show that we live longer, which is very good news. However, birth rates have been declining for years (fertility below the replacement rate 2.15), and we face the problem of international migrations, mainly people of working age. At the end of the second decade of the 21st century older people (65 or over) constituted about 17% of the population, by 2070 their share will have risen, according to

new category is conditional on a constant increase of the number of people at the age of over 90 years.

3 While maintaining an individual's well-being, excluding factors which cause pathological ageing, i.e. pre-mature ageing.

demographic projections, to over 33% and will be higher than the expected average for the present 27 EU countries⁴, which is to be at 29% (EC, 2018).

Space for older people

While reflecting on the importance of space in older people's life, there are three kinds of space to be distinguished, depending on the scale:

- micro – house, apartment, room;
- meso – block of flats, district;
- macro – city, region.

Moreover, the requirements in terms of space in which an older person lives are connected with the stage of the ageing process, and diseases which influence the ability to live independently. The following can be distinguished here:

- completely independent people;
- independent people in need for mobile care;
- people in need for permanent stationery care (at home and/or care institutions);
- dependent people requiring specialized care (Care-Therapeutic Institute, inpatient hospices, nursing homes).

The degree of a senior's independence changes throughout the ageing process – in every case. Almost every older person (apart from sudden crises resulting in death, e.g. heart attack, car accident) requires help and support on a daily basis at a certain stage of their life. The period is sometimes short, and in other cases (e.g. Alzheimer's disease) next steps take place successively and senior's independence decreases with every week/month/year.

Living conditions of older people (n=150) who showed different degrees of independence and lived in buildings of different standards⁵ were the subject of the research conducted in Warsaw in 2017. Respondents determined the categories of barriers in the apartments they occupied and in the nearest surroundings.

4 The prediction was developed for all EU countries, without taking into account a possible exit of Great Britain from European Union

5 The full version of this report is published on the website of Pro-active Initiatives Foundation Go Silver (Fundacja Aktywnych Inicjatyw Rozwoju Go Silver), <http://www.gosilver.org.pl/raport-GS-seniorzy.pdf>

Tab. 1. Main structural barriers in apartments, buildings and surroundings in the opinion of seniors.

Apartments	• tight rooms • no central heating • no shower base / too high • no bathroom • high thresholds • no grips in bathrooms
Building	• no elevator • no banisters • no vehicle • inconvenient passageways
Surroundings	• uneven sidewalks • no elements of small architecture • little greenery • no facilities for the disabled

Source: (Cieśla & Iwański, 2017)

In the case of apartments the main problem was the square footage. The issue was reported mostly by people living in the outbuildings, the standard of which differs significantly from the one adopted in multifamily housing today. Another problem is the lack of central heating system which results in a necessity to use solid fuel stoves or quite expensive and ineffective electrical panels. Next group of barriers considered bathrooms (in extreme cases the lack of bathrooms) where respondents indicated that it is equipped with a bath when they need a shower. In terms of a building, respondents pointed out the lack of an elevator and no bannisters in the corridors. Inappropriate small infrastructure and no green areas (which are displaced in large cities with parking lots and new houses) were also described as problematic.

Apartment

On an individual level, ageing process affects the requirements that seniors' apartments shall meet. Agnieszka and Jan Cieśla (2018) point the following conditionings:

- as a result of children's independence and possible cases of widowhood, a sudden decline in demand for living space occurs;
- with time, deteriorating health makes it even more acute to function without ergonomic spatial solutions, and with architectural barriers;
- decrease of mobility occurs together with increase in the demand for services (e.g. healthcare services) and a necessity to search for social interaction outside the home, very often inhabited alone;

– capability to maintain the household decreases due to a more modest income after stopping or limiting professional activities, whereas poor physical condition might hinder past involvement in household chores (Cieśła & Cieśła, 2018, p. 44);

The scope of changes connected with the adjustment of an apartment to the senior's needs depends mostly on a degree of independence, economic potential for the household, architectural barriers and the needs a senior shows. The awareness of what changes might be made, and how they might be implemented (e.g. endowment from State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (PFRON) is also significant. Older people get attached to the things they have collected throughout their life, and thus it is sometimes difficult to dispose of them. Even if the things might pose a potential risk for their health. Edbom-Kolarz and Marcinkowski (2011, p. 315) point out the external causes of seniors' falls resulting in severe injuries. They advise to remove the rugs from passageways, unnecessary furniture, accessories, and thresholds, and ensuring the proper lightning in the rooms, as well as safety in the bathroom through replacing a bath with a shower base and mounting essential grip handles and supports.

In terms of things influencing everyday life of seniors who require assistance, we might distinguish two categories. The first category of things is meant for seniors, the other - for their caregivers, family as well as professional ones. An apartment equipped with appliances which facilitate the care might be of significant importance for life comfort, but also for ergonomics and the safety of the caregiver at work. The attention should primarily be drawn to the bathroom, where, apart from replacing the bath with a shower unit, other facilities should be provided, e.g. a special toilet seat which facilitates to defecate unaided. With patients in more severe conditions, other facilities should be considered, e.g. a toilet or bath chair. When we are dealing with an immobilized person, it is important that we buy a special bed, anti-bedsore mattress and a set of accessories necessary for the care of a person with minimal autonomy.

While conducting the research in nursing environment of older people, the Author frequently found himself in a situation where seniors were aware of the fact that their apartment needs adjusting, but found it difficult to accept the "hospital nature" some items of equipment facilitating care presented (Iwański, 2016) 6. The situation occurred mostly in the households where one of the spouses cared for the other. Sometimes, seniors' children try, unsuccessfully, to convince their parents to make necessary changes in the apartment. This context indicates that the changes, although necessary, must be accepted by the seniors themselves. In 2016 Warsaw opened the first Exemplary Senior Apartment where a number of the latest solutions in the field of gerontotech-

6 The Author of the article was conducting a research in 2018 and 2019 in terms of implementation of a new benefit for caregivers caring for Alzheimer's patients on a sample of 471 caregivers, which was introduced by Szczecin City Municipality under the name 'Bon Alzheimer 75' (Bon opiekuńczy Alzheimer 75). More information on the benefit can be found on Szczecin Benefit Centre (Szczecińskie Centrum Świadczeń). http://swiadczenia.szczecin.pl/index.php?r=bon_opiekunczy_al75

nology⁷. A space of 50 square meters was designed to enable an older person to live independently, even in the case of mobility constraints, etc. A total financial cost of adjusting the space and its equipment (i.a. a washing bowl with a washing and drying function, a shower seat, mechanisms lowering wall cupboards, etc.) was over 213 000 PLN (Cieśla & Cieśla, 2018, p. 55).

Block of flats

A quality and comfort older people's life is also influenced by the building they live in. In Poland multi-family houses prevails and nearly 80% of seniors live in such buildings. Almost a half (45%) occupies the apartments above the ground floor where there is no elevator (Iwański et. al., 2018, p.168). These are the barriers which have a great influence on the life of older people. Seniors living on the upper floors of the buildings with no elevators might become so called 'the prisoners of the fourth floor'. The problem concerns people who have a difficulty to move on the stairs, and a barrier of several floors forces them to limit their living space to their own apartment. An installation of an elevator is an expenditure of several hundred thousand PLN, which in most cases exceeds financial capacity of housing communities or associations. In 2018 the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on establishing Accessibility Plus Programme which aimed at creating the mechanisms to finance investments on removing architectural barriers in residential and public buildings, including elevators. In the near future there will be more stair lifts or ramps for wheelchairs. The support for such initiatives can be found in the idea of creating housing estates which are sustainable, take account of inclusiveness and accessibility, safety and the standard corresponding to modern housing culture (Rataj & Suszyńska, 2017).

Some older people live in the buildings where the initial design stage (the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) did not provide for washing facilities. The problem occurs relatively often in the case of outbuildings in big cities. The lack of toilet constitutes a certain discomfort for young people, whereas for seniors who deal with numerous difficulties in terms of mobility going down to the landing to use a toilet might be challenging and increase the risk of falling. The problem is particularly oppressive at night and in winter when it is cold in the staircase.

Public space

Current building standards stipulate that every newly constructed public utility facility must be adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities, which is also beneficial for older people. Principles of Universal Design, widely promoted in the EU and by Polish authorities on different levels, specify that the space should be created in such a way as not to exclude any groups of people with any constraints (the disabled,

⁷ The project website: <http://mimowieku.pl/>

older people, etc.). Although the buildings themselves are crucial, the space around, passageways, and leisure and relaxation facilities are of significant importance, too. Even a best-designed building needs to be reachable.

When designing public space, certain investments should be taken into account, e.g. accordingly adjusted public transport, platforms by the entrances, benches for resting, public toilets, etc. There might also be a problem with traffic lights. They are often programmed incorrectly, and the time for people to cross the street at a green light is too short.

In a vast majority of Polish cities the proportion of older people will continue to increase in local populations. It is important to adjust the space in such a manner as to ensure that moving around the city is comfortable, and, most importantly, safe for seniors.

Design standards in creating space for older people depend on the area they live in: natural, rural, suburban, pre-urban, urban and metropolitan. According to Zasina and Wróblewski's research, the inhabitants from the first three areas need approximately 6 to 15 minutes to get to the means of public communication, between 8 and 20 minutes to reach the grocery store on foot, and as many as 27 up to 42 minutes to get to a health care center. In the case of pre-urban, urban and metropolitan inhabitants, reaching a public communication stop takes from 1 to 4 minutes, a grocery store from 1 to 3 minutes, and a doctor from 4 to 11 minutes (Zasina & Wróblewski 2016).

As one can notice the old age has many faces in geographical terms which will particularly influence two spheres in the coming decades. The first one is depopulation of rural areas where Young people's migration will result in a Town mostly inhabited by Old people. Such trend may trigger gradual disappearance of public utility facilities, such as shops, GP practices, etc., and this in turn will have a direct impact on and will contribute to a decrease in quality and comfort of life. The other category includes suburban areas which are being developed at a very fast pace recently. In such areas residential housing prevails and all services are provided in cities. They have leisure-sleeping predestination without securing, vital in the old age, public services, such as health care centers, pharmacies, social welfare centers (entitled to provide community care services).

Conclusions

Ageing population creates numerous challenges to certain communities, forcing them to adjust the space to seniors' needs. It is also important that the access to the things of crucial importance in increasing the quality and comfort of life in the old age, especially very old (85 years and over), increases. The aforementioned things are, for instance, hearing aids, accessories facilitating everyday care and hygiene, geronto-

technology objects, etc. Thinking about the future should involve the needs of older people, who will soon constitute around one third of the population.

As the number of people in their productive age will continue to decrease, the care potential of the family will also reduce. Older people at risk of reliance on care will have to adjust their space in a way as to remain in the current environment as long as possible. If the pace at which new care facilities (nursing homes, therapeutic and nursing institutions, sheltered housing, etc.) are created is remained, there will not be enough places for people in need for support and help in everyday life. It is therefore essential to design the space in a manner that enables an older person to live comfortably and safely in their own environment.

Although solutions in terms of gerontechnology are adopted rather slowly in public space, the symbiosis of older people and the things dedicated to them seem inevitable (Zapędowska- Kling, 2015). In order to minimize the negative consequences of ageing population, it is vital to take necessary measures to raise public awareness in terms of the need for private and public space to be adjusted.

The process of preparation for the old age, individually and socially, inclines to take action in gerontechnology development and making direct users and observers familiar. As natural as seeing child seats at the restaurant is today, it soon will no longer be surprising to also see special cutlery, tableware for people with reduced capacities; and the steps will not only be accompanied by vehicle ramps and grip handles and supports, but also a stairlift. The old age is coming and things might help us to adjust.

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Senior's competencies against global digital transformation

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Keywords: information competences of seniors, competent senior in cyberspace, safe senior in digital environment

Abstract

The modern digital environment is increasingly integrating with the everyday life of modern people, regardless of the place of residence, education or age. Today, cyberspace is a parallel space of social activity to the living environment known to man for centuries. Information and media competence are becoming effective help and support for seniors' media activity.

Introduction

The information has always been an integral aspect of every human activity; it would be hard to define any human action without mentioning information per se or information exchanged in the communication process. Technological information and communication revolution which took place at the turn of the centuries has revolutionized the processes of communication as well as acquiring, processing and publishing information, and human habitat gained its parallel – virtual version. The consequences of the rapid and continuous development of information and telecommunication technologies cause regular changes in the functioning of humans who get access to more and more advanced digital environment to perform their professional, social and educational activities. The dynamic, ongoing development of artificial intelligence and robotics steers towards more and more sophisticated systems that interact with people and thus, will be seen more as partners rather than tools.

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The dynamics of the technological progress of the last decades justifies seeing the transformations as the fourth industrial revolution which affects all aspects of social activity. Virtual reality with its social networks, intelligent information and communication media or ever more advanced robots created a new quality of life, of how we experience emotions, self-awareness, and our environment.

Conditions of global digital transformation

The digital transformation involves social, economic, cultural and demographic changes affecting both individuals and the global community. Increasingly stronger integration of the well-known physical reality and digital space generates new challenges and new values while the new, revolutionary forms of communication and sharing information modify social relations and actions. The influence of the digital transformation on the functioning of the societies cannot be overemphasized, especially in the context of the challenges posed by the dynamic development of artificial intelligence, growing capabilities of cloud computing or increasing accuracy of data stored in the cyberspace (Big Data). It is worth remembering that changes evoked by the digital revolution affect all areas of social activity both, globally and individually – not only businesses, government agencies, and organizations or big research institutes but every family and every individual. Modern digital technologies are integrated with the latest scientific achievements and strategies developed by agencies and governments to solve the problems emerging in the 21st-century society; problems like environmental pollution, natural disasters, social exclusion, waste management or aging of the societies observed in Europe and outside of it. Implementation of modern technological solutions facilitates the planning and implementation of strategies to reduce inequalities and reorganize and modify the systems designed to meet the emerging needs.

The pace of the digital development is measured by the high dynamics of growth and importance of the cyberspace for human social activity: professional, social or personal, and the pace of popularization of new ICT tools (the most typical example are mobile phones in all their variations like Smartphone, Smartwatch, Watch active, etc.). Modern digital environment integrates more and more with the everyday life of modern men, regardless of their place of residence, education or age. And while changes in the social activity, happening unnoticed and continuously due to new generations of media tools, are seen by the digital natives² as a natural element of progress, for the

2 *“Digital natives”* is a term used by the researchers to identify persons born in the digital era, for whom digital reality is the natural living environment. (M. Prensky, *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*, „From On the Horizon”, 2001, Vol. 9 No. 5.)

digital immigrants, seniors in particular³, they may create a barrier that is sometimes impossible to overcome.

Seniors and the rapid development of digital technologies

In the context of our daily digital environment, seniors are undoubtedly in the most difficult situation, as they were born before the invention of computers, Internet, and cyberspace, the latter constituting the environment parallel to the real one we have known for the centuries. This means that active aging generates – stronger than ever – the need for lifelong learning which enables seniors to keep up with social changes caused by the new technologies, especially if these changes mean rapid, continuous development of ICTs and revolutionary, new ways of communicating and obtaining, processing and sharing information. As shown in the gerontological studies (Szmi-gielska, 2014), the effectiveness of embracing the completely new scope of issues and the ability to operate new devices depends on many contexts and means using the available resources to the maximum. Commission of the European Communities decided in June 2007 to set up a plan to increase the number of the retired users of the new media, and the *Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in Poland until 2013* intended, among others, reduction of the digital gap among the elderly citizens. However, reality shows that the effectiveness of activities in this area is not satisfactory. Seniors themselves are the crucial determinant here. The studies into the preparation of seniors to be active in the digital environment clearly show the strong influence of more and more rapid technological changes taking place in modern society (Skibińska, 2012). The vast majority of these changes involve the necessity to engage in new activities, in the new environment which is often completely unknown and constantly evolving⁴. The response to these conditions is the concept of active aging developed by professor R. D Hill⁵, which addresses the necessity of constant learning – even in late adulthood – the new things which engage reasoning and facilitate effective engagement in new activities. It is worth to point out that Hill's concept

3 For the sake of clarity, I assume that “senior” means a person who has ceased their professional activity; in Poland, according to the Act of 1 October 2017, the retirement age is 60 years for women and 65 for men;

4 The studies conducted in Poland (i.e. D. Batorski (2011), B. Kędzierska (2007, 2017, 2018), A. Fabiś (2005)) indicate that the greatest barrier to effective and responsible use of modern media is insufficient level of digital literacy, especially in the growing population of seniors;

5 Professor Robert D. Hill is the professor of psychology at the University of Utah and a therapist

is consistent with the assumptions of positive psychology⁶ which emphasizes, among others, the value of interpersonal openness, optimism, and engagement in the performed activities. The ability and fluency in adapting to new conditions is a surely invaluable support for the seniors who try to navigate through the virtual space. However, it cannot replace the information competencies which ensure responsible, secure and effective activity in cyberspace which is the most available of all the modern ICT tools. The omnipresent media allow for different forms of communication and provide access to the unlimited, yet uncensored, source of information. These conditions not only make information and media competencies, like knowledge and online information-related skills and attitudes, crucial but they are the basic and vital elements of education and preparation of seniors to independent, secure and effective functioning in the digital environment.

Information competencies as a key form of supporting seniors in the digital environment

Based on the analysis of the research and didactic experiences⁷, we can say that the basic education of seniors in the area of information competencies should cover the following key issues⁸:

In terms of knowledge, a competent senior should:

- (be aware of) know that information is the basis of every activity, both direct and related to media;
- know and understand the conditions and attributes of reliable and secure information;
- know and understand the need to resort to reliable and diverse sources of information (virtual, printed and human);
- know and understand the principles of copyright and intellectual property law;
- know the opportunities and conditions of responsible use of digital technologies while communicating and building relationships with newly met people;
- know the reliable sources of information, not only traditional ones but also media and digital resources which support their daily activity and provide opportunities for personal growth;
- know the reliable and strategic source of support in emergencies;

6 Positive psychology was inspired by the works of the University of Pennsylvania professor, Martin Seligman (former president of the American Psychological Association).

7 The original research into the level of digital literacy among students and adults (teachers) were conducted in 2018, in cooperation with the research institute by the Ministry of Digital Affairs (Research and Academic Computer Network) – the report is in print;

8 Didactic activities addressing, for example, the scope and role of digital literacy, led by the author among the students and adult learners confirm that the scope of issues in the area of key information competencies is and should be the same for all social groups in every

- know and understand the threats related to the perception of the reality created by various media messages;
- be aware of the conditions (types, advantages, disadvantages, conditions related to safety) of interpersonal communication through media;
- be aware of the principles related to sharing information (as texts, photographs, videos, etc.) about themselves and their loved ones in the cyberspace;
- know the principles of staying safe while online;
- know the scope of potential e-threats;
- have knowledge regarding safe activity in cyberspace.

In terms of skills, a competent senior should be able to:

- properly identify their information gap and correctly choose the sources of information needed to perform certain tasks;
- responsibly verify and effectively process information;
- identify safe, legal and ethical information on the Internet, paying attention to the issues of copyright, intellectual property law and proper identification of references;
- successfully use modern ICT tools to communicate with family, friends and other people in their lives as well as public institutions;
- use dedicated, thematic knowledge databases developed by professionals;
- intentionally and responsibly use digital devices and resources to facilitate the execution of tasks, develop their interests and improve the quality of their daily life;
- recognize/identify manipulations and threats in media messages and virtual environment;
- verify their actions in the virtual reality and media in regards to the provisions of intellectual property law, the Civil and Penal Code, and provisions of the GDPR;
- consider the basics of ergonomics and safety of working the ICT when using certain media and while online;
- identify biased and unreliable messages in the media, especially all signs of “hate speech”.

In terms of attitudes, a competent senior should:

- responsibly and securely obtain, analyze, verify, process and publish information, using properly selected carriers;
- use safe, legal and ethical information on the Internet, paying attention to the issues of copyright, intellectual property law and proper identification of references;
- accept, recognize and use the opportunity to communicate using the modern media;
- accept and use the contemporary, Internet-based, scientific and social forms of media messaging;
- be aware of the opportunities and the potential of the modern multimedia tools for self-development and social collaboration;

age. It is because today the key information competencies determine all social, private and professional activities.

- respond immediately when noticing the cases of violation of ethics, aggression, and violence;
- take actions in the virtual reality and use multimedia devices, respecting: the intellectual property law, the Civil and Penal Code and the provisions of the GDPR;
- follow the principles of health and safety while working with information technologies and the basic rules work ergonomics;
- respond effectively to identified danger;
- transparently and optimally use chosen media resources to support the completion of tasks;
- show the attitude of tolerance and readiness to communicate on an equal basis in the media.

Summary

In the times of the rapid development of ICTs, change is the only constant of the fluent postmodernity. As a society, we should be ready to face these changes as best as possible. Of all the social groups, digital natives are the ones who adapt best to the digital environment. We can say that they naturally and intuitively integrate the newest multimedia tools into their daily educational, professional and social activities. If deprived of the possibility of functioning in the digital environment, this generation would be much more helpless and lost than seniors who take their first, often timid steps in the world of technologically advanced multimedia tools.

And even though the number of seniors who responsibly and with confidence navigate the digital environment (in regards to their needs) is regularly growing, this social group is still the least active in media. Of course, the goal is not that all the seniors are active social media users, regular online buyers or that they interact with all their friends via online communication tools. However, it is important that they feel and be an integral part of contemporary society – the information society which functions in two spaces at the same time: physical and virtual. For it to be possible, for the seniors to understand the nature and conditions of the process of obtaining, processing and sharing information in the digital space and to be able to engage in different activities in the virtual world in an independent, successful, secure and responsible manner, some intense actions are necessary. These actions involve lifelong informal education which would allow all digital immigrants in their late adulthood, who struggle with the advanced ICTs, to acquire information competencies. Proper knowledge, skills, and attitudes are the most effective protection against the potential threats and equally effective stimulator of activity in the virtual space.

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ARTICLES

ANDRAGOGICAL AND GERAGOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE

Elżbieta Dubas¹

To be and to become in the old age – andragogical perspective on development²

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Keywords: old age, development, dimensions of development, models of old age, andragogy

Abstract

In this paper, the author focuses on issues related to the development of an older person. She presents development as a lifelong process that is also possible at old age and that is manifested through adaptation, transgression, and transcendence. She describes the development in five dimensions: biological, psychical, social, cultural and spiritual. She points to relationships between development and three models: deficit model of old age, active old age model, development model of old age. She points out to some chosen aspects of development at old age which are related to learning/education, shown from the perspective of andragogy and geragogy, and with the use of the conour concept of human development by Stefan Kunowski.

Introduction

We already know very much about old age, but it is still too little and not thorough enough, which is what makes a good life at old age so difficult (Dubas, 2013). And the old age is present in our life – it is inscribed in the very existence of human beings. It is an integral element of a long life that is also everyone's dream and it is hard to envisage a long life with no aging. The old age is included in the progress of our life that

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2 This article in Polish has been published elsewhere: *Być i stawać się w starości – o rozwoju z andragogicznej perspektywy* [w:] *Uczący się dorośli – inspiracje, wyzwania, trendy. Księga jubileuszowa poświęcona Profesorowi Tadeuszowi Aleksandrowi w 80. rocznicę urodzin i 55. rocznicę pracy naukowej*, A. Chabior (red.), Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski 2018, s. 167–196.

starts with childhood and ends with old age precisely. Thus, it “closes” our life circle, it complements it. It is vital to realize clearly that we also “close” our life with the old age and that our participation in this process is, in fact, the most significant. Then, what is worth knowing about older age to “close” our life beautifully? What should be known about it as a stage of human development? How to begin seeing development in old age so as to “close” life beautifully? Human development becomes a key cognitive category in these deliberations.

It should be stated that issues related to human development in old age are not unfamiliar to reflection and gerontological research, the psychology of human development in particular. It would be worth recall the studies carried out by Paul Baltes (in the 80s of the 20th century) or Robert Havighurst (beginning with the 50s of the 20th century), Erik Erikson (beginning with the 60s of the 20th century) and some contemporary Polish psychologists, such as Maria Straś-Romanowska (2000), Zbigniew Pietrasiński (1990), Stanisława Steuden (2011), Piotr Oleś (2011), Joanna Raniżewska – Rain (2005). The aspect of development in the old age is also highlighted in the studies and reflections of pedagogues – gerontologists (Dubas, 2004; Fabiś et al., 2015). It seems, however, that not only in common awareness but also among the researchers, the old age is not unequivocally related to the processes of development. Most frequently we read about the processes of aging in an elderly person and not about the processes of development in old age. Is this only the question of language? Most probably not. There are some socially settled meanings behind a language, which are attributed to old age. And to look into the development of an older person from the widest perspective possible, from a holistic approach, certain assumptions were applied that are part of the contour theory of human development, suggested by a pedagogue, Stefan Kunowski (1993).

The old age as a progressive stage of human life

In the light of the psychology of human development (2005), the old age is the last stage in human development. Development – meaning a chain of life-long changes that are also multi-dimensional (Fabiś et al., 2015), relatively long-lasting and irreversible, with a unidirectional character of quality transformations conditioned by an internal cause (Strelau, 2000), targeted and purposeful, “leading to a greater complexity and inner integrity” (see: Zamiera, following: Strelau, 2000)³, and the direction of these changes does not need to be evaluated positively⁴. In this understanding,

3 “a development change takes place when the observed changes are constant, gradual, unidirectional, irreversible or lead to greater complexity and inner integration” (Zamiera, following: Strelau, 2000, p. 232). *Zmiany rozwojowe – por.* Brzezińska (Brzezińska, 2010).

4 see. “development means a chain of changes (transformations, transitions) in general, regardless of the fact whether their direction is assessed positively” (Przetacznik-Gierowska & Tyszkowa, 2004).

the old age is an important nexus in this process, as are all other stages. Without the old age, the human life circle would be incomplete. Thus, the old age is a value because thanks to experiencing it, we may realize values important to us more fully and perhaps it allows us to understand better what human life is, what it was and what it could be.

The beginning of the old age is typically placed in the 60s of human life. A formal beginning of the old age is frequently associated with the retirement age, which is a variable defined differently in different countries⁵. The old age is a stage of life that is becoming more and more often extended and varied, thus researchers distinguish several of its stages. Generalizing various perspectives⁶ three main stages of the old age may be listed with age limit assigned to them: early the old age, called also *young old* – around 60 – 74; *old-old* between 75-89; *oldest-old* – people over 90.

Young old is the period of "golden autumn of life", ie. When a person is still full of life and has life perspectives. It is the time of making use of the achievements to date – both in a material and spiritual sense. It is the time of making new undertakings and realization of dreams, including the educational ambitions that had to be postponed due to the responsibilities of adulthood. It is the time of taking more pleasure from activities that before. It is the time of self-realization, time "for me", having been freed from professional duties. New activities and social relations, a new perspective of experiencing life in a different way than it was before – all that adds life to the years. These things enhance joy and self-esteem. **Old-old**, as the time of "the setting sun", means slowly losing the vitality and worsening of illnesses, the increasing sense of aging and systematic, often sudden, withdrawing from the external life as a result of illnesses and disability. This is also the time of summing up life. **Oldest-old** ("on stage till the end") is a very individual period, however, it is the time of approaching the inevitable end and sensing death as "a close guest". It is the time of ordering the experiences to date, time of close relationship with the self, environment, and God. It is the time of transcendence – stepping out of the previous understanding of the earthly existence. A long-lived person, who is usually genetically equipped rather generously, remains in a relatively good condition and psycho-physical health practically till their very end, which allows them to live actively even in just some selected dimensions. On the other hand, for a long-lived person who is ailing or undergoes a persistent therapy, life becomes a burden.

Also, a more and more popular division of the old age into two periods – two epochs should be included here: the third and the fourth age. This division is based on a criterion of dexterity and independence of an aging person, much less is it related to

5 For example in our country the retirement age was 67 since 2012 and currently, since 2017, previous arrangements were restored, i.e. 60 for women and 67 for men.

6 See for example Zych (2007, p. 163); Steuden, (2011, p. 20-21); Brzezińska, (Brzezińska, 2005).

their calendar age, although the conventional border between them is 80 or 90 years of age (depending on classification)⁷. The third age is *independent the old age*, the fourth age is *dependent the old age*. As the person is more and more ailing and disable, they become dependent on the help and care from outside, from institutions, including social care ones. By joining these two divisions, one may say that the young-old usually is the time of independent the old age. Dependent the old age concerns more and more often old-old and oldest old.

The old age is not just a question of years and conventional calendar age, neither is it the issue of arbitrary classifications of the researchers or the result of political decisions. Quite commonly we assume also that the old age is the state of mind, the sense of aging (or not), the sense of being (or not) old. The old age greatly depends on how we subjectively understand it. In our times that bring out the importance of individual experience and the subjectivity of each person so much, the subjective dimension of the old age is all the more important. To a great extent, we shape the old age in our thoughts and emotions and most of all, our actions and behavior. It is an immensely important aspect of our attitude to the old age – since it is very “ductile” and depends so much on ourselves. By and large, it is us who bear the responsibility for our own the old age, although we gladly blame Others (family members, politicians, etc., even God himself, which can be seen in a proverb “God failed us in our old age”).

Dimensions of development in the old age

The old age as a stage of human life depends on the course of development processes. Gerontologists most frequently focus on the processes of aging and list three of them: biological, psychological and social aging⁸. However, it is possible to look into the aging processes in a broader context and analyze them as **a process of development**. Modern gerontological science allows to look at the processes of aging from the perspective of development, to see them both as negative (involutionary processes which mean disintegration, impoverishment, decline, and atrophy) and positive ones, understood as **adaptive changes** based on adjusting to new circumstances, transgressive changes which mean transcending the experience of this earthly existence towards the absolute and universal values. It is worth highlighting that the process of regression is accompanied by the adaptive-regulatory mechanism as “biological mobilization of power to resist the progressive involution leading to death”, which refers not only to the biological but also to the psychological aspect (Olszewski, 2003). A human being is not doomed to recourse – “fall” and a person’s biological, psychological and spiritual sides are evoked by the powers that counteract “disintegration”. There-

7 See for example Dubas (Dubas, 2009); Steuden, (Steuden, 2011); A. Fabiś, J. K. Wawrzyniak, A. Chabior, (Fabiś et al., 2015).

8 See for example (Zych, 2007); Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dzięgielewska, (Szatur-Jaworska et al., 2006).

fore he can adapt to the regressive changes and transcend them. Adaptation, transgression, and development transcendence are an expression of this. Aging processes have complex content and course. They depend not only on hereditary background, environment influence, education impact (including the upbringing), the influence of fate but also, most of all, they depend on the activity of an individual himself. In other words, it depends on the personal involvement of man in his development both in the period before and during the old age what kind of old age he will personally experience. Man's development, also in the period of his old age, maybe analyzed by accepting a general classification in a few dimensions: biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual⁹. They will be characterized briefly below.

The biological development of man is the foundation of his existence. According to Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1982), the biological layer is the base of life processes common for all animal world. Man, however, faces the challenge of transcending biological development, which he does in a psycho-cultural dimension. The biological development of man in the old age is most frequently referred to as biological aging.

Biological aging of man is an expression of organism weakening in maintaining homeostasis (balance) of life processes. This means regressive changes appearing at an increasing intensity as far as physical and physiological functions are concerned, which can be observed in the body failure and medical conditions. Biological regressive changes begin to overtake as early as in a person's forties. They manifest themselves in body aging and a decrease in efficiency, in lowered immunity and thus, increased susceptibility to illnesses. Biological recourse is an expression of the body's depletion of vitality. As a consequence, it leads to death, in its natural course to senile decay.

It is possible, however, within the dimension of biological development, to strengthen the body through appropriate nutrition, physical activity, exercises, systematic control of the health condition, revitalization undertaking as well as through asceticism and restraints which favor body discipline and maintain it in good condition. One can adapt to biological aging through, for example using various types of equipment and through rehabilitation treatments. One could even try to "improve" the body condition compared to the previous period, by applying more personalized physical exercises, balanced nutrition adjusted to the possibilities and needs of the body, etc.

Biological development of an elderly person is related to visible changes in appearance, worsened dexterity and physical condition, deteriorating somatic health.

There are numerous theoretical concepts and patterns of thinking about the old age in the context of biological development. It needs to be stressed that the old age pattern present commonly but also in the scientific world, concerns **solely the biological regression**. It is embodied by, for example, a deficit model of old age (Dubas, 2004), where the old age is treated as a development deficiency, the result of body wear

⁹ See: Dubas (Dubas, 2004); Dimensions of development derived from the contour concept of development by Stefan Kunowski (Kunowski, 1993) who distinguishes 5 contours of development: biological, psychological, sociological, cultural and worldview one.

and any revitalization of the organism refers just to the biological sphere. Biological deficits, including the changes related to appearance and the worsening physical condition, directly influence the formularization of **the negative stereotypes about the old age** which refer also to other dimensions in which a person functions, for example, social and cultural spheres. One of those is undoubtedly ageism (Szatur-Jaworska et al., 2006, p. 216–220), which is an example of specific discrimination, marginalization and segregation of people according to their calendar age and the changes in appearance that come with it. The old age is also seen in **categories of ugliness** (the ugliness of an aging body or face). The old age is sometimes pictured as **the negative difference** which disturbs, which needs to be fought with, fenced off from, in which it is difficult to see any value. In opposition to the old age, there is the pattern of eternal youth. This is envisaged in, for example, the concept of “kidult” (Twardowska-Rajewska, 2006), Peter Pan personality or “eternal girl” (Kargul, 2017).

However, apart from those patterns of the old age resulting clearly from the fact of biological aging of the body, one can more and more often notice in scientific studies and colloquial thinking that there is a tendency to break this cliché placed only in the context of biological recourse. It is worth stressing that there is an optimistic overtone of the concept of biological welfare (Olszewski, 2003), whose mechanism can be also found in the area of psyche. Undoubtedly, the concept of **body transcendence** is particularly significant in this context, which can be directly derived from **the theory of gerotranscendence** by Lars Tornstam (1985, a quote from Halicki; also in Malec, 2012). Body transcendence shows that the biological aging of the body can in a way be “outperformed” by the spiritual development of man. The category of carnality is one of five areas of adult education (Kargul, 2001), where multi-aspect references to the human body and formulating individual awareness of one’s carnality as a result of varied processes of learning are included.

Thus, human carnality – a biological expression of people’s functioning in older age is also placed in the progressive model of the old age (Dubas, 2004). Biological development takes place in several ways, the most frequent of which is **adaptation**, realized as making use of the still existing capabilities of the body, systematic adjustment to the regressive biological changes, including strengthening through biological revitalization treatments, maintaining good health and physical condition characteristic for the previous development stage, ie. complete adulthood (which is reflected in the conservative model of the old age (Dubas, 2004). Another, a more rare method is **transgression** expressed through improving physical and health condition (perfecting it) and going beyond the capabilities and achievements in one’s physicality to date. Finally, we should look into development **transcendence** as an example of corporeality transgression through other dimensions of development, including spiritual development performed more intensively than previously.

Biological development combined with the processes of learning includes: updating knowledge about one’s changing corporeality, acquiring skills related to coun-

teracting biological recourse, sustaining and strengthening biological development, shaping attitude towards corporeality, including aging of the human body and one's own. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the biological dimension of development in old age are the result of life-long learning in this field, although at the same time there is a possibility to modify them in the period of the old age itself. Raising awareness that such a possibility exists is an important task for andragogy-geragogy. It is worth adding that, as Stefan Kunowski put it (1993, p. 203) the biological layer of man develops through fun, which is a developing form of life. It needs to be stressed that it does not concern just a child and that fun should not be deprived of some motor character. Physical activity that gives pleasure, ie. fun, is an important factor of biological development, which is so often overlooked.

Psychological development of man refers to life-long changes in the area of cognitive, emotional and volitional functions. Psychologists, however, recognize many detailed divisions and distinguish, for example cognitive, emotional, social, moral, personality or individual differences division (Harwas-Napierała & Trempała, 2010), they write about identity changes (Brzezińska, 2005) or highlight the changes in cognitive processes (Olechnik, 2000). Stefan Kunowski, a pedagogue, links psychological development to the development of intelligence and interests. This aspect of development expands, in his opinion, through learning, searching and practical activities (Kunowski, 1993, p. 198–203). The author also notices that through development in this area, a man joins the “wisdom” of human species (ibid, p. 198).

Old-old (late adulthood) is linked with the processes of psychological functions recourse. In this context, gerontologists often write about the psychological aging of man. It refers to the changes and decrease of man's capabilities related to psychological functions, in this area of incredibly important cognitive processes, among which aging of memory, decrease in efficiency of thinking processes and learning are very significant. The will weakens, efficiency and agency decrease. Personality changes, control mechanisms weaken, fears grow. Motivation to live drops as a result of, for example, oversaturation with life experience. Strategies of self-control and dealing with emotions change (Raniszewska-Rain, 2005).

Brain activity understood broadly as learning is immensely important here (through adapting to changes and transcendence). This is realized as:

- Remembering, unlearning the old and learning the new (as knowledge, abilities, and attitudes);
- Learning both in institutions (which is pictured by formal education – school, non-formal – extracurricular, for example, courses, at the University of Third Age, etc.) and outside, ie. in everyday situations and in everyday relations (which must mean non-formal, incidental and accidental education);
- Learning in modern culture (ie. using modern technologies, for example, the Internet, computer, e-learning, blended learning) and in traditional culture (for example using books, traditional teaching methods);

- Learning realized as a reflection/thinking process/meditation on life and others, on oneself and one's biography, which favors the understanding of life (Dubas, 2007), gaining "transcendent wisdom" (Straś-Romanowska, 2000);

- Learning is realized during the process of solving problems, also those in everyday situations, which favors managing life;

- Emotional learning as work on and with emotions which should not destroy relations with other people but strengthen the positive image of an elderly person, for example, a senior or mentor of a family;

- finally, learning is realized as permanent self-formation and self-creation, which favor gaining a mature identity, as identity, by changing throughout life, is also assigned to man¹⁰.

Learning as a process that supports psychological development in the old age, based on important values, related to the healthy lifestyle and physical activity that brings pleasure, can undoubtedly be accepted as a panacea for elder age.

Social development of man understood as a socialization process, ie. preparation for functioning in a given society, is carried out through socialization interactions and broadly understood education (formal and non-formal). Work is thus a developing form of life (Kunowski, 1993, p. 203). Development in this dimension means accepting norms and mechanisms of social functioning, learning the roles related to participation in social life. This process is life-long, provided a person remains in social interactions (direct and/or indirect ones) throughout his whole life. We could say that man develops permanently in his social roles, which allows him to function in social life more adequately and according to his capabilities. The omnipresent processes of socialization change their character in different periods of man's life. Primary socialization shapes attitudes of man's social nature by equipping him with a dimension of social norms, habits, and rituals. Secondary socialization, at a later stage of life, in the time of adulthood, contributes to "perfecting" social nature in man, as a result of which he acquires skills necessary to do tasks for this society that are important and responsible, such as procreation, securing existence and raising the next generation(s). The third type of socialization is related to the old age, it confronts man with other social and personal challenges. This type of socialization often referred to as desocialization, shows the difficult process of learning life from scratch, so to say, in a changed reality. In case of dependent the old age – disabled and not independent, sometimes referred to as the fourth age, the fourth socialization, through "learning" how to deal with the burden of aging, slowly prepares an elderly person and his environment for passing away.

The repertoire of social roles that are the field of social development of man is very rich, it starts with the first role – the one of a child, through the last one – a dying person. Some roles appear some others vanish. Oftentimes the roles evolve, i.e. their

10 The description of learning and educating related to the stages of adult life, including old-old and oldest-old can be found in Dubas, 2009, s. 125–129.

content changes, the role command is weakening, etc. The reasons for this evolution are the following: biological changes (including the aging processes) that man undergoes and which cast on his functioning in everyday life and modify social expectations towards him, and cultural – civilization changes which create new social roles. Many social roles are continued almost throughout the whole life, although slightly adjusted. Such is the role of a child, roles of parents, grandparents and – in the era of permanent education – also the role of a learner.

Social development in the old age is frequently simplified and reduced to social aging, which is highly conditioned by the social norms, it reflects the changes in the dimension of the roles played in society. Some roles vanish, e.g. professional role. Others undergo modification, e.g. parental role changes as children grow and leave home. Yet other roles appear as new ones, e.g. carer for the ill spouse, the role of a widow or a widower, the role of an ill or a disabled person. Most of those roles are not easy and exhausting, with a tremendous existential load which includes concern and fear for one's life in the context of more and more frequent contact with death. A particular place in the repertoire of roles of an elderly person is one of a grandparent, which can be described as the role "full of joy". What also changes is the social position of a senior citizen and their lifestyle that results from retirement and having plenty of time of their hands. The old age from that perspective requires afresh socialization, re-learning how to exist in society in this new role. Despite the previous contact with the old age in "the current of life" through participating in social life, family life in particular, through observation of social behavior towards the old age and in it, an elderly person may lack proper knowledge, skills, and attitude. Social aging is strongly related to the stereotype of the old age that function in a given society. Typically in our times, these clichés are negative. Successful aging would require resisting those stereotypes personally and that, in turn, calls for a new approach both towards the old age and oneself as an elderly or even old person.

Learning is undoubtedly related to the social development of man, also the elderly one. Theories of learning make it all too clear by accentuating the social aspect of learning (Bandura, 2007; Illeris, 2006). Because learning is a social process. It takes place in socialization, where observation, copying, and modeling are important. It is also realized through formal and non-formal education. Roles models, personal patterns and mentors play an important role here. Learning is present in the processes of self-reflection/ reflection when it favors the increase of (self)awareness, (self)control and (self)formation. It is a life-long character since throughout all our life man learns references and social attitudes. Throughout all life man also remains in the role of a learner of other people and the world of social norms. In the period of old age/the old age, a man also becomes a more or less conscious teacher of other people, including being a counselor, trustee, mentor, "the teacher of life". It is worth remembering also about the "teaching" aspect of socializing adults and older people by the younger generation, ie. adults learning from children.

In the presented perspective, the social development of an older person is obvious.

The cultural development of man favors bringing out the specificity of the human world compared to the animal world. Creation is a person's developmental form of life (Kunowski, 1993, p. 203). It introduces man into the world of culture: material goods created by man (including the civilization, technological or architectural achievements) as well as spiritual ones (in the area of art, science, religion, tradition, sport, entertainment, etc.). Cultural development is sometimes recognized anthropologically (descriptively), where every person is treated as a cultural being and each culture is equiponderant, and normatively (qualitatively), when culture is treated as a reserve of values selected by a given society as particularly appreciated. In this sense, we may talk about the cultural development of man through, for example, participation in higher or elite culture, or about the development of a personal culture of man and becoming a man of culture.

Cultural development also takes place mainly through the processes of inculturation (introducing a person into the world of cultural values), but also socialization and education. It combines with the consumption of cultural goods (using cultural goods through, for example attending theatres, reading, etc.) and creating it, which may be realized in the narrow, sociological or broad, psychological sense that is "customized", as everyday creativity. In the first case, it is about creating something new, original and valuable that would be a part of an individual's experience of a wider community or even more universally – the whole humanity. Education (by definition) makes higher culture accessible and directs towards values that are objectively higher in the hierarchy of values¹¹ which results from the studies by Szpakowski, (2014). It teaches us to use cultural goods and teaches creating cultural goods. In the cultural development of man, older generations play an important role because of the pass on cultural values from generation to generation.

The cultural development of an elderly person that is often, quite wrongly, described as aging and it refers to the changes in the functioning of an elderly person in the sphere of cultural values, both material and spiritual. By limiting the possibilities, for example financial, health, communication ones, oftentimes also cultural, the use of cultural goods and institutions changes and may be limited to home only. Here prevails using mass media (radio, TV, newspapers) and gradually, also the repertoire of the used programs and media content is limited to those requiring the least effort. Often this use is passive. Also creating cultural goods changes. As understood universally and timelessly, it is more and more rarely realized by elderly people whose strength is weakening. Frequently, this does not concern professions – artists, scientists and representatives of other areas of culture. Creating cultural goods, as understood broadly, psychologically may, however, be realized by everyone to the best of their abilities. Such creativity (with a small "c") also is a source of joy and can be good for

11 Referring to the hierarchy of values by Max Scheler

the closest ones. Using culture and creating it are important aspects of making life more beautiful and thus counteracting the routine of everyday life. It is worth emphasizing the importance of cultural activity that is based on making music, painting pictures, writing poems, stories, autobiographies. This is yet another example of adding life to the years (Zaorska, 1999) in this way counteracting the negative processes of aging. One cannot mention the importance of the oldest generation in the process of passing on traditions and introducing the youth into the values of the world of culture (inculturation). The greater amount of free time that the elderly have on their hands than people who are professionally active also is important culturally. Organizing and realizing activities in that time is mostly done in the area of culture, although it is not necessarily always the elite one.

An elderly person is also a cultural being – they make use of cultural goods, although they do it slightly differently and to a more and more limited extent, however, they do work out their standpoint towards culture, they pass on to others the values which they managed to externalize thus far in the process of their long life, they create goods and values of culture made to their measure, but thanks to them they have their place in the “generations race”, which cannot be underestimated. In their experience of the old age, they join the cultural heritage of the community they live in.

The spiritual development of man is related to the process of changes in human spirituality. Spirituality is understood rather broadly nowadays, stepping out way beyond the religious aspect (Groeschel, 1998), and including its many dimensions (Socha, 2000). Spiritual development is a specific and overreaching dimension of human development, the one that penetrates all other dimensions. Although man enters adulthood having his spirituality fully developed, yet older life is related to visible changes in that area. Spiritual development, if it evolves with age and experience of man, favors achieving coherent identity and fullness of humanity. Thus, it joins the process of personalization – bringing out the fullness of a person in man.

It is hard to call spiritual development in old age aging. Spiritual development in the old age may favor a harmonious merge of all the dimensions of the triple nature of man (*triune*) – the body (*soma*), psyche (*psyche*) and the spirit (*spirit*). It is related to certain spiritual competence, that is the ability allowing to shape one's life based on the highest values (the truth, goodness, beauty, sanctity) in the context of unquestionable difficulties that appear while experiencing the old age. These difficulties may develop than competence even more compared to the previous period. The old age brings many existential concerns which include suffering, loneliness, dying and death (Fabiś, 2013). All of them “require” some answers. The more a person is developed spiritually, the more mature in experiencing their the old age he is, and that means providing answers to the difficult, existential questions. The old age may be the time of particularly intense spiritual development, which is the opposite of spiritual impoverishment. Spiritual maturity, that is aging in its positive meaning – “maturing”, may be observed in, for example:

- in the dimension of perfecting and complementing social and moral attitudes towards the closest ones, towards the younger generation, towards people in general, which reveals the socio-spiritual aspect of spiritual development,

- in the dimension of perfecting the outlook on religion, including shaping a grown-up attitude towards God, the Absolute, which is reflected in the religious aspect as well as in the outlook on spiritual development,

- in the dimension of maturing in aesthetic attitude, which is reflected in perceiving beauty in life and in creating life, also this everyday one in one's biography¹², which is an aesthetic aspect of spiritual development,

- in the dimension of making mature choices from the parent, universal and transcendental values, ie. the truth, goodness and beauty, and sanctity, which outlines the aspect of spiritual development,

- in searching for answers to the question about the sense of life, the value of human fate and that of humanity, through which the cognitive-existential aspect of spiritual development is expressed¹³. It can also be seen in:

- achieving life wisdom that allows life-affirmation together with its hardships and also allows to find joy in life¹⁴ as well as

- in clarifying one's philosophy of life, including attitudes towards the old age, death and achieving the art of life¹⁵.

Spiritual development understood and realized as improvement, favors mature preparation for passing away and "crossing to the other side" - without being disappointed, without regrets or jealousy. In the dimension of spiritual development, the old age is the time of many challenges and possibilities. It can be the time of "going forward" and heading for fullness despite the regressive biological changes. It can be the time of a deep transition and understanding the essence of everything. Sometimes not an only adaptation but also transformation and transcendence. The spiritual development of man at an older age is confirmed by the gerontological theory of gerotranscendence¹⁶. Transcendence – reference to immortality, may be interpreted as a result of the ninth development phase as suggested by Joan M. Erikson¹⁷. It is not always, however, that we deal with spiritual development in old age. Oftentimes the old age ends a person's life with great disappointment and despair, deep and unsolved drama of existence¹⁸. A person "subsides" in his humanity and treats the old age as a curse.

12 See: the issue of aestheticization in the old age: Dubas, (2008).

13 See also the selected aspects of spiritual development/spirituality: Socha (2000); Dubas, 2004; Fabiś, (2015); Fabiś, Błachnio (ed.) 2015.

14 See: "Transcendent wisdom": Straś – Romanowska, (2000, p. 282–287).

15 See: the art. of life – the art of aging: Dubas, (2012).

16 See: Lars Tornstam, following: Halicki, (Halicki, 2006); Malec (Malec, 2012).

17 See: essay: Bugajska, (Bugajska, 2015).

18 See: Erik Erikson, integrity versus despair and possible results of development in the eighth stage of life; following: Bugajska, (Bugajska, 2015).

From the viewpoint of Stefan Kunowski, human spirituality is expressed through wisdom in searching for the truth and goodness, evaluating according to the ultimate perfection, metaphysical profoundness, deep reflection, joining the supernatural world. Spiritual development takes place through prayer which, in Kunowski's opinion, is the main progressive life form (Kunowski, 1993, p. 203). In the context of contemporary studies into biographies and human narrative, emphasizing the significant importance of human reflection and contemplation in the process of spiritual development. From the andragogical perspective, which is focused on noticing and enhancing the processes of learning throughout the course of an adult's life, spiritual aging is an expression of education understood as an in-depth life learning, as "meditation over life" (Czerniawska, 2000, p. 177–178). From this meditation understanding of the meaning of life may emerge (Dubas, 2008a), which – as a result – means clarifying the meaning of life as an individual, as a species or even in the cosmic sense. Experiencing life as meaningful is, after all, a person's great expectation. The meaningful life cannot include meaningless the old age, thus a question arises concerning giving or restoring this meaning to the old age also, as it is the last stage of life.

Models of the old age and development

The old age has been explained in various ways – there exist different models¹⁹. According to the deficit model, of the old age, man's aging is treated as a defect that needs fixing through various treatments to sustain the life functions of the organism and, to some extent, prevent disintegration for some time. Such an old age is related to the negative stereotype of the old age. However, it can be looked at through an active old age model, assuming that by sustaining man's activities, the process of aging can be delayed and the organism's dexterity characteristic for the middle age, can be maintained for some time. Finally, the old age can be explained through the development model of old age which describes it as the time of human development or even the time of a person's improvement. The presented models of the old age are not just a more or less accurate result of scientific research, but also a recommendation of a certain kind of lifestyle at an older stage of life. Opting for one of them determines the way of thinking about aging and, as a consequence, creates certain social attitudes towards the old age and also individual ways of experiencing one's aging. The progressive model of the old age²⁰ **brings out the value of aging as a person's stage of life**, it shows the opportunity that the old age gives, highlights the overall perspective of development as heading towards the fullness of life despite numerous limitations.

19 See: Dubas, 2004, p. 136 and further; a different classification points to, for example, the pathological, normal and successful model

20 Related to, for example, the theory of human development by Paul Bates and the concept of development tasks by Robert Havighurst; see: Fabiś, Wawrzyniak, Chabior, 2015, p. 34–36.

The old age is, to a great extent, a result of previous "lessons of life", previous experiences, life choices and acquired attitudes towards life.

Throughout the whole life, we learn life by experiencing it. What allows us to complete our life beautifully and successfully close the cycle of our development is included in the art of living that is acquired through our life. This art of living also means the art. of aging (Dubas, 2012).

The old age is not easy. But it does not fall upon us suddenly. We have many years to tame it, to learn it. Undoubtedly, the old age is a certain everyday task for us (to perform). Oftentimes it turns out to be a challenge, too. But it can also be a gift²¹ - an opportunity and value; it serves a purpose – and it is worth learning what it is and engaging in that service. It is a service to ourselves – it helps us to mature as a person and understand the meaning of (our) life. This is the service helping us develop towards fullness.

Summary

Reflections presented above allow for a summary of a few general conclusions and the main theses. And so, if we understand development as the process of changes a person undergoes, together with his identity and the world of his life, then development is a **life-long** process which concerns also an elderly person (which is reflected in *life span development psychology* theory). In this context, an elderly person does not age but **still develops**. It is, therefore, adequate to talk about, for example, the social development of an elderly person rather than about the social aging of a person. This is not just the question of naming the problem, but of awareness that is opposed to a stereotypical approach to the old age and provoking to choose a different paradigm of studies on older age, presenting it in a progressive model (and not the deficit or cognitive one). An elderly person has **many reasons** to develop. These are the needs, duties, expectations which are strongly conditioned by his existential situation. **The personal engagement** of an elderly person in his development is very important. It is he who, to a great extent, is responsible for the results of his development. The old age is **an important link** in the process of human development. Without the old age, the life cycle of man is incomplete. The old age closes man's life circle. In this meaning, the old age is **a value** because experiencing it allows a person to realize some important values to a fuller extent, perhaps understand what life is and what it was or could have been. It is thus significant, to bring **the meaning of the old age** back as the time of life that is experienced so that we can understand life.

The processes of learning related to deepening awareness and self-awareness which are recognized as important and implemented in various dimensions of everyday activities, allow experiencing the old age as a progressive process. They are the key

21 See also similar: Zych (ed.) The old age is a gift, a task, and a challenge. Selected conference materials. Wyd. Progres, Sosnowiec – Dąbrowa Górnicza 2014; Dubas, 2016.

elements that favor successful aging and experiencing the full circle of life as a value. It is also reasonable to make people aware of the fact that, at any age, that learning as an existential experience which is an ally of better fate and a development factor understood as heading towards the fullness of humanity, is crucial.

Perceiving the old age as a progressive process in a life of a person means that it becomes a perspective of “becoming in the old age” as opposed to the perspective of “being in the old age”. “To be old”, ie. to become an old man, is a static perspective. Objectively speaking, it means reaching the social status of an elderly/old person having reached the period of formal old age, which is usually at the retirement age. Subjectively speaking, it means the feeling of “being old” which is shaped by personal and individual experiences of aging. The sense of being old is currently placed between 70 and 80 years of age. “To become in the old age” on the other hand is a dynamic category, it is a conscious and realized attitude of perfecting humanity despite the regressive changes experienced in the old age. It is conscious engagement in the process of permanent clarification of one’s identity, using the subsequent years of life and subsequent experiences to “become” someone more than this far. “Becoming in the old age” points to the expressed needs of learning oneself and life. “Becoming in the old age” is unquestionably a progressive process that is characterized by faith in the possibility of becoming someone more than this far, determination in dealing with the challenges of fate and the joy of achieving what seemed impossible.

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Educational opportunities for seniors and the most common non-formal organization of senior education – Polish perspective

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Keywords: elderly people, learning in old age, acquiring knowledge, acquisition of knowledge and skills, late-life learning, dance education, language education

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to show the specifics of the educational offer addressed to the Polish senior. Selected forms of cultural and educational work were analyzed, including the offer of senior clubs, dance classes and language learning. Poland, through its senior policy, organization and creation of some educational projects, tries to support the development of this social stratum. The possibility of participating in various types of activities carried out, e.g. in senior clubs, universities of the third age and courses positively affects the well-being of seniors. Older people gain the opportunity to maintain good interpersonal relationships, meet new people, share their experiences, and expand cognitive horizons. Senior clubs, U3A, dance and language schools enable lifelong intellectual development. Researches prove that in the elderly people can improve their own physical condition, they can start speaking foreign languages, work on improving memory and developing a network of new friends.

Introduction

The purpose of the article is to prove that Poland is a country that has a rich educational offer for seniors, cares for their education and intellectual development. Among the various forms of gerontological education implemented in senior clubs, U3A and other facilities (learning in old age² (Szarota 2015), dance and language classes were selected for analysis. Assumptions of the theory of activity (see Halicki

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2 Z. Szarota (2015). *Uczenie się starości*, *Edukacja Dorosłych* 1 (72), p. 23–36.

2006)³ show that seniors, in order to maintain their own emotional balance, mental and physical well-being, should take on new roles and fulfill themselves in new areas of activity. Conception life-long learning, actually late life-long learning also includes elderly people. The benefits of educational involvement are indisputable.

Senior's clubs

In the gerontological literature you can find reports that indicate a high correlation between the activity of seniors and their sense of happiness, satisfaction and assessment of the quality of life in old age (Bugajska, 2007). According to information based on the National Senior Policy, senior clubs are institutions for the normalization of activities by combating the feeling of loneliness, isolation and redundancy functions. In addition, they support the intellectual and creative capabilities of older people. They began to arise in Europe after World War II, and have been present in Poland since the 1960s. The genesis of this movement is associated with the growing demographic changes of aging societies and the resulting cultural consequences, that is, the need to develop a free-time offer for the growing number of elderly people. Well-managed and used free time is an ally of permanent education. In this approach, it is a factor conducive to the creation and development of autotelic and cognitive values (Szarota, 2009).

Senior clubs in Poland are the most widely available and in most cases a free form of activating older people. In Polish conditions, senior clubs are also a relatively new organizational form related to the activation of older people. The offer and development of clubs depend primarily on the activity and efficiency of the leaders and members of these institutions. The range of activities carried out as part of senior clubs can be quite diverse. These classes are associated with the lowest costs, are the easiest to organize and in most cases take place systematically (minimum once a week) (Raczyk & Herbut, 2016). Some clubs offered their participants various types of workshops and training. Their most common form was meetings with specialists people: doctors, nutritionists, pharmacists, beauticians, police officers, as well as writers, poets, and travelers. This thematic category also includes artistic workshops, mainly during the holiday season (e.g. preparation of decorations, cards). (Gulanowski, 2012). Other categories (choir, card games, logic games, club cinema) are indicated relatively less often. Noteworthy, however, is the very large diversity of popularity of classes. It can be noted that seniors prefer those forms of activity that they are unable to provide themselves and which are associated with the intensification of social life (e.g. dance evenings, trips, parties). Senior clubs in Poland are self-help centers of social, cultural, educational and caring life. The purpose of senior clubs is to improve the quality of life of older and lonely people through their integration with the local environment.

3 See: J. Halicki (2004). Społeczne teorie starzenia się. In: M. Halicka, J. Halicki (Eds.), *Zostawić ślad na ziemi...*

As part of the clubs' activities, seniors can also participate in courses and training, e.g. computer use or Internet use. The activity of the elderly meets, above all, the need to be useful and necessary, gives a sense of accomplishment, independence, enables the transmission of life wisdom and accumulated experience (Pośluszna, 2012). The first stage in the educational process of seniors is motivation. It is this that influences the fact that seniors meet with their instructors, e.g. in the computer room and start learning together. The theory of motivation is based on the assumption that human predictions related to education are related to his previous educational experience (Jurczyk-Romanowska, 2012).

Senior clubs play not only the role of social activation but also the concept of cultural participation and socio-cultural animation. Senior clubs through their activities influence the change of personality and behavior of older people, allow to find a satisfactory model of life in old age. The basic elements of such an old age model can be activity, creativity, and prosociality. This is a place where seniors can pursue their interests, develop hobbies, feel comfortable in a circle of matters and people they know and understand. Their main task is to keep older people in a state of activity, and thus self-sufficiency and independence in life for the longest possible life in a natural environment for them. The reference to the basics of cultural and educational activity and the theory of cultural participation as well as social and educational animation shows that they have a much broader social and cultural context and dimension. Senior clubs are treated as a form of social activation, at the level of which cultural participation and socio-educational animation are implemented (Chabior, 2011).

The Polish phenomenon are undoubtedly Universities of the Third Age. Their mission is to activate seniors, among others, by educating, learning, expanding knowledge and developing the interests of listeners, as well as organizing active leisure time and enabling meeting new people. In 2018, 640 Universities of the Third Age operated in the form of various organizations and institutions in Poland. The total number of U3A students in the 2017/2018 academic year was 113.2 thousand, of which 86.3% are people aged 61 and more. The most numerous group of participants was made up of younger seniors (61–75 years), whose participation in the analyzed period amounted to 70.3% of the total audience, and people aged 76 and more accounted for 16.0%. The largest number of seniors aged 61 and above took part in activities in the Podlasie and Lubusz Voivodships. The least seniors from the Świętokrzyskie and Wielkopolskie voivodships in this age group participated in the classes. The students of the Universities of the Third Age, irrespective of the voivodship and age group, are the vast majority of women. In the 2017/2018 academic year, they accounted for 84.3% of the total number of U3A students. Among students aged 61–75 years, the share of women was slightly higher and amounted to 84.8%, and among U3A participants aged 76 and more was at the level of 79.4% (Wyszkowska & Gabińska & Romańska, 2020).

Dance classes for seniors

Some seniors want to stay fit and self-sufficient for as long as possible, which is why more and more people are looking for ways to active old age. Some of them have dreamed of going to dance classes, but they have never had such opportunities before. When it comes to health, then dance exercises tailored to their own physical abilities bring maximum effect. Rhythmic exercises with musical accompaniment, properly selected for age and mobility, are one of the means of gerontological prevention. Dance classes prevent senile dementia, increase the body's ability to absorb oxygen, improve lung ventilation, and increase the maximum stroke and minute volume of the heart (Banio & Banio-Surmiak, 2017).

In recent years, dance has become one of the most popular forms of physical activity in Poland. Due to the widely propagated fashion for dancing, an increasing number of people enroll in all dance courses. Every year there are more and more dance schools presenting a very diverse offer. Abilities or skills are also irrelevant, because classes are organized in many levels of advancement, which allows to find classes that will give satisfaction and joy, and will also meet expectations. Participation in dance classes helps an individual adapt more easily to changes - increased activity and effort as well as new conditions. By dancing, senior can compensate deficiencies and unmet needs, and support and stimulate human psychophysical development. According to research conducted in Poland, the majority of people attending dance classes for seniors are single people (widowed or divorced). This involves the need to be with someone, belong to a group and create a community. It is important for them to be in the company of people of a similar age, brought up at the same time, struggling with similar problems and understanding each other. Some of them hope to find a life partner in this company. They have an innate need to be useful and needed. The desire to remain in full psychophysical fitness is quite obvious because every person would like to become self-sufficient as long as possible. This is an undeniable reason that explains the need for active aging, fulfilling your dreams and taking care of your own health (Banio & Banio-Surmiak, 2017). The effect of great interest in dance in our country is the dynamically developing dance clubs and interest circles at the Universities of the Third Age or Senior Clubs coming out with an offer of movement and dance classes. Dance is a great fun proposition, it gives you entertainment, allows you to escape from everyday problems, greatly improves your mood and relaxes you mentally. At the Universities of the Third Age dance classes are conducted which use therapeutic knowledge based on the principles of kinesitherapy, music therapy, and choreotherapy. These types of activities streamline and strengthen their participants through the use of ballroom and folk dance techniques, yoga elements as well as aerobics and choreotherapy (Śliwińska, 2014). Dance is one of the most desirable physical activities among seniors. Dance with all its range of types and styles and a variety of pace becomes one of the most pleasant forms of stimulating the work of the human

body (Kott, 2017). Group dancing brings satisfaction when you manage to master new systems. This requires increased concentration and memory exercise. You can dance them in any group, regardless of the number of men who are necessary in traditional dances. They often use traditional folk tunes and forms of group dance (Zaorska, 1997). Australian research⁴ shows that social interaction is the motivation for attending ballet classes for the elderly. Motivation is a key factor motivating active older people to participate in and enjoy ballet. Participation in ballet classes positively on the body of the elderly. They feel more energetic, lively, keeping fit, body control, awareness, posture, flexibility, physical well-being, and general well-being. When ballet classes for seniors began to be organized, it turned out that in some incentive motivations for activity in the classes resulting from previous ballet experiences of women. Ballet participants for seniors openly admitted that now they would have time to fulfill their dreams. Further incentive criteria are present in the group who contribute to the inspiration of participating in ballet. People participating in the classes interact with people. They often go to coffee together after classes and organize social gatherings. An important issue of ballet exercises is also a matter of exercise exercises for seniors. Exercises must be set at a level so that they are not too difficult and do not demotivate the class. When it comes to experienced social ballet participants, they feel that they are feeling community and building relationships (Ali-Haapala & Moyle & Kerr, 2018). According to the theory of activity⁵ that are still valid more active older people are more satisfied with their lives. In order to maintain a positive self-image, older people must replace with new roles those who lost along with the aging process. In this way, well-being in old age is the result of increasing activity in newly acquired roles (Halicki, 2006). During the joint dance, a bond is established between mutual participants of ballet classes. It is worth noting that the participants of dance classes exchange comments with the participation of them refer to ballet movements. In classes for seniors, there is a culture of mutual assistance in obtaining movements and sequences. The ballet hall serves seniors not only to work on their own body and development, but also is a meeting place, and then a weekly contact point supporting social engagement. Unlike classes for young people, there is no phenomenon of competition, judgments, feelings of feeling worse or better than others in seniors classes. In groups of senior members, the participants help each other and get accepted, help and receive help. Participation in ballet classes is undoubtedly a very pleasant activity for active seniors. Ballet love, joy, a sense of achievement and happiness are common emotional experiences that are involved in attributing ballet (Ali-Haapala & Moyle & Kerr, 2018). Dance has a

4 Ali-Haapala, A., Moyle, G., Kerr, G. (2018). Ballet Moves for Adult Creative Health, Stage One – Research Report, Australia. Retrieved from <https://www.braceworks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Queensland-Ballet-Balet-Moves-for-Adult-Creative-Health-report-2018.pdf>

5 See: J. Halicki (2004). Społeczne teorie starzenia się. In: M. Halicka, J. Halicki (Eds.), *Zostawić ślad na ziemi...*

positive effect on both the physical, mental and social levels. The physical activity of the individual increases. As a result, the level of general physical fitness also increases, visual-motor coordination and functioning of the systems, mainly motor, circulatory, respiratory, nervous and metabolism, are improved. On the other hand, attention and memory are improved on the mental level (Pluta & Krzykała & Andrzejewski, 2018).

Słowińska (Słowińska, 2019) draws attention to the fact that the field in which seniors are involved is often of secondary importance to them. Not because of the interest in a certain area of culture and the need for implementation within it, these people join in cultural activity. The choice of the field of participation is dictated by the relational nature of the classes, in other words, seniors reach for such a form and a field that provides direct, close interpersonal contacts. Cultural activity with this approach has no autotelic value, seniors do not engage in it for itself, but because it enables them to maintain social contacts, it becomes an antidote to social isolation. The instrumental approach to cultural activity is also represented by those caring for form, but in this case, the goal is to maintain fitness and physical fitness. Although the field of involvement is not chosen by them because of cultural passion, it is not accidental. For seniors who care about their form, it is about a kind of activity that is based on physical effort and promotes fitness. For example, this criterion is met by dance, treated not so much as a field of artistic culture, but as a kind of gymnastics (Słowińska, 2019).

Languages classes for the elderly

The place and form of learning foreign language classes for seniors is determined not only by their psychophysical abilities, funds, lifestyle, or access to broadly understood infrastructure ensuring the possibility of participating in a language course, but also by specific experiences, needs and interests. In smaller institutions specializing in language training of seniors, the most commonly taught are modern lingua franca – English – as well as German, French, Italian and increasingly Russian and Spanish. However, it is in large Universities of the Third Age, associating several hundred and more members – these operate mainly in large agglomerations – seniors have the opportunity to learn less popular languages, even those which in Polish are considered exotic, such as Japanese, Chinese or Esperanto. Among Polish seniors, some people are willing to learn about cultures and languages from distant corners of the world. If one of the languages of interest is not in the program offer of the nearest UTW, senior club or even a commercial language school, then this gap is filled with sources and multimedia courses to which an increasing group of seniors has access every year. Among the preferred activities that seniors undertake while learning foreign languages is active participation in discussions, asking / explaining problems, independent work, e.g. when solving written tasks, working in pairs or larger groups, participating in projects requiring activity and creativity. It is also worth consider-

ing active activities in which seniors take part in language courses in Poland. These include activities such as joint trips abroad organized as part of a language course, reading texts and then solving, exercises for these texts, written grammar exercises, repetition of converted material, physical education, e.g. in dance, using the recorder, and then listening recorded material and thus preserving it. What is more, seniors have opportunity to learn through games and plays, play scenes in a foreign language, watch thematic films and then discuss them, write stories on a given topic, repeat after a teacher, solve written tests, listen to texts recorded on a CD, sing (as breaks in the lesson), interpret and translate, oral or written description of the event, joint checking of homework from the previous lesson (Jaroszewska, 2013).

Stolarczyk-Zielonka (2010) draws attention to the fact that old age is characterized by some changes taking place in various spheres of human life, which in turn leads to linguistic and communicative changes. Determining specific dependencies can be helpful in maintaining language skills by old people. It should also be added that the output of linguists regarding the discussed issue is extremely modest. All information on aging comes from psychological, biological or sociological sources. Only based on them are a few linguistic conclusions. It is worth paying attention to the biological, psychological and social aspects of aging and their impact on language and communication skills. Language communication is one of the most important aspects of how people function in society. It consists of some skills, including intellectual (speaking, understanding, or cheap, etc.), whose mastery and high level of qualification guarantee the effectiveness of communication events occurring between people. Not only linguists but also researchers remaining in the field of other specialties, such as the important role of language and language communication in human life like psychology or sociology. Much attention was therefore directed to research on children's language development in the ontogenesis process. Multi-faceted experiments in this area carried out by such scientists as Piaget, Wygotski, and Łuria, expanded knowledge about the acquisition of human language and communication skills, and created a rich scientific and research base. On its basis, it is known that language and communication skills are conditioned by some social, psychological and biological factors. In recent decades, there has been an increasing proportion of elderly people in society. In the face of this demographic process, it seems reasonable to pay attention to the language and language communication of this group of people (Stolarczyk-Zielonka, 2010). The factor that is undoubtedly associated with old age is the deteriorating state of the senses, such as eyesight, hearing, and decreasing motor skills of the body. The information delivered to the brain through these senses is no longer as consistent, less detailed, and takes more time to provide than young people. "A clear defect in the process of perception is due to the fact that the old mind is less fluent in merging the sorption information into one coherent whole" (Stuart-Hamilton 2000, p. 34). With age, the weight of the brain also decreases, which means that the number of nerve cells responsible for learning efficiency and speed decreases. Some

older people, therefore, absorb new knowledge more slowly, remember more slowly, and have weaker adaptability. Age also significantly affects memory, which is an essential factor in mental functioning. "The decrease in the number and efficiency of neurons responsible for remembering and processing new information means that the physical memory system is constantly at risk" (Stuart-Hamilton 2000, p. 113). Thanks to efficiently working memory systems, it is possible to learn new things, recall and reproduce information learned earlier. As memory in people over the age of sixty tends to deteriorate, the consequence of this fact may be a gradual decrease in intellectual skills, including language and communication skills. Research on memory processes in old age shows that direct memory, i.e. the one that is responsible for recalling content in the field of attention, reduces its capabilities. On the other hand, the indirect memory indicates that elderly people have problems with referring to content, things, events that have ceased to be the object of their reflection. Without much difficulty, they use knowledge and experience to which they return with their thoughts (Zych, 1999). In old age, other difficulties are also observed at the language level. These include speech disorders caused by various factors, for example, hearing problems, but also changes in the brain. Speech organs are controlled by some of its spheres, damage to any of them as a result of illness or other event causes difficulties in the process of speaking. Speech disorders may be the result of brain aphasia. "Aphatic disorders are injuries to the brain that perform intellectual functions" (Maruszewski, 1970). One of the Russian scholars, Łuria, who was observing people with aphasia, noted that the disease was caused by damage to the phonemic hearing responsible for all speech activities. Another reason for the communication problems of the elderly may be the so-called auditory-verbal memory, thanks to which it is possible to remember words and their sound, as well as is necessary when interpreting spoken speech. In the case of aphatic disorders, also internal speech conditioning the production of speech does not fulfill its functions (Stolarczyk-Zielonka, 2010). In the case of pedagogical considerations should be distinguished gerontological education and geragogy. Gerontological education disseminates knowledge about old age, using various educational environments, organizational forms, methods and means of didactic communication in this process. Geragogy is the pedagogy of aging and old people. It is a study of the conditions and effects of educational and educational activities that accompany the aging process and old age. It conducts research on the extension and optimization of the active life conditions of people in post-working age (Szarota, 2015). Paying attention to the basics of gerontological education, it should be taken into account that the program for training seniors covered medical, socio-cultural and social issues. They were supposed to contribute to the development of old people, but above all to equip them with the ability to adapt to life in modern society. From the point of view of general old age models, modernist education of seniors is best described by a deficit and conservative old age model. The essence of the former is the theory of limited use, which assumes that the body's functions diminish with age. However, they can be kept in shape by exercising

and training to delay deterioration processes. Conservative old age model, however, emphasizes the importance of individual activity, allowing you to enjoy physical and mental health for longer. This model directly derives from the theory of activity, which according to some researchers should be seen as the theory of adaptation to old age. The deficit model of old age recognizes the elderly as a kind of mechanism that breaks down, deteriorates and breaks down. It can be repaired by appropriate treatments (Muszyński, 2016). We can distinguish three possibilities of foreign language education. Firstly, at the level of formal education – this may include learning foreign languages at primary school, high schools and colleges; as a result, an appropriate level of formal education targeted at a given foreign language is obtained (this possibility is more specific for children, young people, and adults of working age). At the level of non-formal education, i.e. learning foreign languages at language schools or as part of educational language programs/activities at third-century universities, third-century academies, day centers, and retirees' clubs. At the level of informal education – this is the most accessible, spontaneous and non-institutional education in foreign languages, e.g. through communication in communities, watching TV programs or listening to radio programs in a foreign language, reading books, materials or tourist guides, etc. (Švec, 2008).

Older people learn to be self-sufficient in undertaking subsequent tasks resulting from personality development. According to E. Skibińska (Skibińska, 2008), global goals of senior education are “understanding the world combined with the ability to interpret it”, “shaping the attitude of responsibility for oneself and one's future”, as well as acquiring “the ability to solve everyday problems” (Skibińska, 2008, p. 100). Given the specifics of learning in old age, and therefore mainly through non-formal education, its characteristics and purpose can be defined in words Olga Czerniawska: “Educational aspects of quality of life consist in accepting the reinterpretation of one's own experiences, one's past, searching for forgotten or undervalued values in it, reliving them for self-development, for a better life in the present, for accepting one's change through maturing to today, until tomorrow, by constantly designing your life, seeing future perspectives, even if this perspective is for tomorrow, week, month” (Czerniawska, 2000, p. 178). According to the theory of activity, to survive old age, seniors must take care of their activity, also on the level of learning. So that it would give them satisfaction, and at the same time, that the community would accept these activities and be able to use this activity in part. Education is not only the goal of activity but also a tool for acquiring new competencies that allow development and action. One can propose an education model as a tool for self-determination and self-sufficiency in old age based mainly on its three basic functions: emancipatory, altruistic and egotistic (Fabiś, 2005). The emancipation function aims to strengthen the whole generation. Education not only maintains the position and place of seniors in all environments, which constantly develops, freeing oneself from dependencies, oppressive conditions, stereotypes, superstitions, up to raising the generation of seniors in the social hierarchy,

independence – both on an individual scale and in relation to the whole population. Education understood in this way will be utilized through participation in social life through participation in decision-making bodies, to create for seniors – as a generation, an important place in the social structure, to care for the interests of the oldest citizens. The second function – altruistic – helps to realize the need to support another. Learning allows you to understand others and equips you with the necessary knowledge and skills to act for the benefit of others. By opening up to others and engaging in the surrounding world, by working for others and by learning for others and from them, seniors can find themselves in the role of volunteers, carers or local politicians, animators in the local environment of members of charity teams. The third direction of learning allows you to realize the needs related to your development, are selfish learning, aimed at yourself, leading to self-realization, to self-realization, to fulfill your ambitions, dreams, aspirations, and aspirations. Thanks to learning, a mature man not only broadens his interests or develops himself, but he also becomes more perfect in the spiritual space. He can face existential concerns, problems of everyday life in old age, and it is also easier for him to prepare for death. For the elderly, learning creates great opportunities for development. In a life marked by a lot of free time, it becomes an alternative to boredom and underdeveloped activities. Regardless of the level of education and educational biography in old age, everyone can find suitable educational activities for themselves. For people supporting old people, this is an important task: finding areas of educational activity that are appropriate for the individual. Certainly, the university of the third age will be an excellent offer for educated people looking for contacts with others, for open people, social people willing to learn and discuss to other leisure activities, such as sport, tourism, art, but also learning similar to traditional learning at school. Universities for seniors are becoming the meeting place of the local elite, the most emancipated part of seniors. A slightly different target group consists of participants of senior clubs. These have a more local character, are focused on creative and valuable spending of free time. However, these proposals place fewer requirements for participants. These are often meetings with interesting people, joint games and artistic activities, but also activities of a typically ludic character. They allow to establish and strengthen contacts in local communities, maintain mental and physical condition, and above all allow you to spend an interesting and creative time, supporting development in late adulthood (Chabior & Fabiś & Wawrzyniak, 2014).

The activation process is the basis for the functioning of educational institutions, whose offer is addressed to the elderly. Participants of cultural and educational classes undertake various educational tasks, using modern tools to acquire and consolidate knowledge. Learning is not a boring process for them. This is a fascinating challenge, but also a civilizational and conscious necessity. It is cognitive activity open to reflective everyday experience, multiplication of knowledge and skills. This is necessary in the era of rapidly changing technologies (Szarota, 2014).

Summary

Considering the message of the idea of the learning process in old age and the assumptions of Polish senior policy expressed in the support of older people in their dignified, independent life. It is worth noting that Poland is trying to support seniors in satisfying their educational and cultural needs, developing and acquiring new knowledge, skills, shaping various competences necessary in the 21st century. Traditional areas of senior education are expanding. The didactic but also market demand for compliance of the content of education with the educational needs of learners causes the development of new forms and methods of language learning, new forms of recreational activity, in this case dance. The added value of these processes is senior competence in managing time resources and a sense of belonging to society. The Polish life-long education market is open to seniors. The topic of the need for education of the elderly has intensively developed due to the aging of the population. It is worth paying attention to third-century universities, which were created to maintain spiritual health, support personal development and to facilitate aging. The Polish senior education system should focus on the opportunity to acquire new skills for all older people. It is worth paying attention to the qualifications of foreign language teachers and the methodology of working with seniors. When considering the educational offer for seniors, special attention should be paid to the need to distinguish between (foreign language) education of young people and the education (foreign language) of adults and older people on the other hand.

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Polish phenomenon of Universities of the Third Age

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Keywords: University of the third age, senior education, learning, old age, old age education

Abstract

The text falls in line with the area of interests of social gerontology as it focuses on one of the adult education institutions, the University of the Third Age. The following issues are addressed: definition of U3A, genesis of the first U3A in the world, history of founding a Polish university for seniors and the role of professor Halina Szwarc, further development of the U3A movement in Poland, changes in Polish U3As brought about by the breakthrough year 1989, joining the European Union and technological progress. The issues addressed are complemented in the final section of the text with an overview of the present U3A movement, its characteristics, critical evaluation and discussion over its further development and innovative nature of educational activities for seniors, which are an integral part of the local and national senior policy.

Introduction

The goal of the paper is to characterize the development of the Universities of the Third Age in Poland in the context of historical, political and social transformations. It presents the dynamics of the changes and outlines the contemporary role of the Polish U3As. Universities of the Third Age (*fr. Universités du Troisième Âge*) is a very important adult – senior in particular – education institutions in Poland. One can even say they are the “hallmark” of educationally active seniors. First of all, they fit

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the non-formal adult education model (some teaching methods used in U3As involve also some elements of informal education) where the development of knowledge and skills is accompanied by restoring or developing competencies and the learning adults are given the opportunity for comprehensive personal growth. Learning takes place in different locations and spaces, in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere and partnership relations. Students are motivated to get involved, which also encourages them to share the responsibility for the results with their educators. Such an approach may help to stay motivated and generate energy to continue the efforts. More and more often, U3As follow the modern trends in adult education like edutainment, using social media, learning platforms, and other media and education practices of the 21st century. They use mixed strategies of working with adult learners, applying different methods and forms of teaching to activate the senior community. U3As are involved in education, research, social and civil activities focused on improving the quality of life of people in their middle and late adulthood. They are committed to ensure professional preparation of their adult educators to work with senior students, leveraging studies and experiences of modern andragogy and gerontology. Conferences, seminars, trainings, projects, contests, national and international exchange of leaders, administrators and students of the U3As support the processes of developing knowledge and creativity. The activities of the U3As implement the idea of Lifelong Learning (LLL). The above examples do not exhaust the scope of challenges. At present, there are many new opportunities like an opening to the oldest persons and persons with disabilities, distant learning, e-medicine, robotics, the labor market for seniors, lifelong counseling and career planning, further activation and development of creativity among seniors. This would be a brief definition of the contemporary Polish Universities of the Third Age.

First University of the Third Age in the world

The origins of the Universities of the Third Age date back to the 1970s. In 1972, first efforts to found the first institution of this type in the world began and it was launched in 1973, at the official inauguration of the academic year in the University of the Third Age in Toulouse. This event had been preceded by the emergence, in the second half of the 20th century (mainly in Europe), of numerous organizations focused on the advocacy of the rights of the older citizens. These organizations were founded as a response to the noticeable process of progressive aging of European societies. The most important ones were: International Association of Gerontology (IAG), European Federation of Older Persons (EURAG) and International Center of Social Gerontology (*Centre international de gérontologie sociale, CIGS*).

At the end of the 1960s, there were also many student movements demanding university reforms. In France, a bill was adopted which guaranteed the opportunity to learn at universities regardless of age. All these events, the large academic potential of

Toulouse university staff and personal engagement of many people, especially professor Pierre Vellas, created the climate to establish in 1973 the first university for older people, which was called the University of the Third Age (Szwarc, 1995; Konieczna-Woźniak, 2001, p. 40; Czerniawska, 1996, pp. 232-233; Szarota, 2010, pp. 145-146). The University's role was to create a new image of older people and influence public opinion by meeting the following goals:

1. Providing lifelong learning opportunities for older persons,
2. Education of students in the area of social gerontology,
3. Preparation of expert staff to work with seniors,
4. Conducting research into medical, legal and psycho-social problems of old people.

The founder of the first U3A, an international law professor Pierre Vellas published the book "Le troisième Souffle" in which he describes his own experiences related to the founding of the University: *The University began its, at first modest, activity without any gerontologist on board. About 40 people came for the first meeting. There was nice music in the room before the lecture. But the first session did not meet with particular interest. Only when young people joined the U3A and began to greet the seniors, guide them to their seats, provide information and assistance the initiative spread and older people felt more secure and confident... Older people are dynamic, cheerful, await every offer with excitement, they are grateful, zealous learners aware that they do not have much time left and, what is interesting, this last reason is a very strong motivator. They are also committed and turn out to be grateful students. For many of the students, U3A turns out to be not only an educational institution but also the institution of human solidarity* (Vellas, 1977, cited in Konieczna-Woźniak, 2001, pp. 41-42).

The supreme goal of creating a university for seniors was the intention to ensure they have the proper and rightful place in the national and global socio-political structures. These assumptions were to be implemented through scientific research and the practical implementation of the results. The creator of the idea and the first U3A also wanted to prevent loneliness of older people, to give them the motivation to live and be active, often as they struggle with different diseases and changes in the quality of their lives. Professor Pierre Vellas knew the problems but also the developmental potential of seniors because he spent much time with his parents and grandparents, and his own family was multigenerational.

The unique, original initiative of Pierre Vellas turned out to be very relevant because, after Toulouse, new U3Aa were founded in Europe and then all over the world. Now, thousands of the universities (even if we count only the European ones) for older people provide education under different names, not necessarily referring to the third age (e.g. *Seniorenuniversität*), and evolve in various directions. Different countries set different requirements for new establishments. For example, in the Czech Republic, there are only over a dozen senior universities due to the very strict criteria regarding teaching staff in a university of the third age and curricula, which limit the number of the U3As only to those funded directly by the academic centers. In Hungary, in turn, there are no typical

Universities of the Third Age because the so-called open universities play that role (Fabiś, Wawrzyniak, & Chabior, 2014, p. 191).

It is worth to point out that, apart from the Universities of the Third Age, there are many other (and sometimes older) educational institutions in the world, where seniors can learn. The British examples include The Open University, Institutes of Senior Education, Institutes of Continuing Education, Education Colleges, etc. In Germany, seniors study in Senior Academies or People's Universities and other, similar units. In Scandinavian countries, education offers targeted specifically to older people is also connected with adult education and university programs. In the United States, there are also different forms of education addressed specifically to seniors. A unique form of teaching during summer are courses in university campuses connected with leisure and travels (some Polish U3As also introduce the same practices). American universities open special programs for older citizens. There are many senior education institutions in the world and they function under different names but these which follow the programs similar to the ones realized in the Polish U3As are most often called: senior academies, intergenerational universities, universities of the third age and free time, universities for all, mid-life universities, universities without borders, universities (academies) of the noble age, open universities of the third age or profiled U3As (medical, artistic, biological, etc.) (Zych, 2001; Halicki, 2000; Konieczna-Woźniak, 2007).

Universities of the Third Age – historical overview

The idea of opening the first University of the Third Age in Warsaw came as a result of scientific collaboration and relations of professor Halina Szwarc with professor Pierre Vellas. Halina Szwarc was a professor of medicine and gerontologist, an amazing person, charismatic and open to people and their concerns. As a very young woman she became a war conspirator and a soldier of the Polish Home Army, imprisoned and tortured by Gestapo, she was even sentenced to death. *“Since about 1974 she began to specialize in gerontology. She had always liked older patients. She organized the Institute of Gerontology with the Gerontological Rehabilitation Ward at the Centre for Postgraduate Medical Education in Warsaw. She found out how much one can help the elderly if working in a team consisting of medical doctors, psychologists, sociologists, and physical culture specialists. By the end of the 1970s, she was a renowned gerontologist. Amazing person. Amazing woman. National hero. Unquestioned authority and a very humble, direct, understanding and friendly person”* (Bielowska, 2015). During the hard 1970s, despite Poland being closed to cooperation with the Western European countries and the United States, she had already been recognized by the international gerontological organizations. Inspired by Pierre Vellas' idea presented during the gerontologist meeting on 2 April 1975, professor Szwarc decided to found a U3A. It was then named the Study of the Third Age by the Centre for Postgraduate Medical Education in Warsaw. The official inauguration of the first academic year in this in-

stitution took place on 12 November 1975 and it was the third institution of this type in the world. The interest among the seniors and attendance was great and during the first term in 1975 as much as 323 persons enrolled. This reflected the great need for this type of educational offer in Poland (Lubryczyńska, 2005).

The first activities in Study of the Third Age were interest clubs but due to the growing number of students, they were transformed into teams and sections. The first university for seniors set several goals.

“Organizing the first U3A, we set the following goals:

- 1) Include older people into the lifelong learning system,*
- 2) Intellectual, psychological and physical activation of the students,*
- 3) Development of teaching methods and implementation of gerontological prevention,*
- 4) Conducting scientific observations and research* (Szwarc, 1995; Informator Sekcji

UTW przy PTG, 1987; Pólturzycki 2014, p. 97). These goals were consistent with the objective of the French U3As. Apart from its didactic activities addressed to the students, the pioneer university engaged in cooperation with other educational institutions and its representatives supported the efforts of those who wanted to open similar centers in other regions of Poland. The idea of U3A began to spread all over the country. Already a year later, in 1976, the U3A in Wrocław was founded. Then, universities for seniors were established in Opole, Szczecin, Poznań, Gdańsk, and Łódź. The Warsaw U3A had become a think tank regarding the development of the idea of universities of the third age and the research into the education of older people. The U3A in Warsaw had contributed greatly to the further development of the U3As in Poland both, practically (the number of new units) and ideologically, especially regarding the research into learning in and for the old age (see Lubryczyńska, 2005; Konieczna-Woźniak, 2001). In 2003 the Warsaw U3A was named after Professor Halina Szwarc (who died in 2002).

Years 1975–1979 were the time of the intense growth of the U3A movement in the big academic centers in Poland. For several years after 1979, there were no new universities and then, in the 1980s, came another wave of new institutions.

The activity of the Polish U3As was based on French and Swiss patterns. Already during the first period of their functioning, the movement organizers and authorities of the 7 existing Polish universities noticed the necessity to establish a single organization to join their efforts. Its role was to coordinate the work at the national and international level. In 1980, during the second scientific conference and organizational meeting, the representatives of the Polish U3As submitted a motion to establish a University of the Third Age Section by the Polish Society of Gerontology (PTG, Polskie Towarzystwo Gerontologiczne). The request was supported during the annual general PTG meeting in Białystok in September 1981. The first president of the Polish U3A Section by PTG was professor Halina Szwarc and the section became part of the International Association of the Universities of the Third Age (L' Association Internationale des Universités du Troisième Âge – AIUTA). Professor Szwarc became a Board member and was actively involved in it for many years. Thanks to her efforts, the 1987 AIUTA

Congress was organized in Warsaw and its main focus was on education and health. Another Polish representative in the AIUTA Board was prof. Czerniawska from Łódź.

According to the Section, the primary goal of the universities of the third age is: *“to improve the quality of life of older people, providing conditions for good aging, breaking false stereotypes and images of older people as physically and mentally disabled. This goal was to be met by including seniors into the education system based on the intellectual, scientific and material potential of the universities”* (Informator Sekcji UTW przy PTG, 1986).

Universities of the Third Age against the backdrop of systemic changes

As the years went by and new social, cultural or economic conditions emerged, the implementation of Pierre Vellas' idea had to be modified. Today we have the French U3A model which is based on the strong engagements of the academic centers in creating and managing such units, whereas in the British model self-assistance and independence of the students are the dominating features.

The 1989 breakthrough – the collapse of the communism and the beginning of systemic transformations – was also reflected in establishing new and reorganizing the existing U3As. Many of them initiated the process of transformations and began to strive for greater autonomy by establishing associations, which did not exclude continuous collaboration with the academic environment (based on separate agreements made). As a result of this reorganization, some U3As became NGOs, associations with legal personality and own program within the set statutory role.

Thanks to the generosity of their students and other entities, some U3As set up foundations to support the activities of universities, individual needs of their students or certain environments, seniors in particular, in a poor financial condition.

Another change invoked opening next U3As thanks to the growing network of non-public and branches of the public universities. This way, the idea of the U3A reached smaller towns that decided to open U3As despite lacking an academic infrastructure and using the resources of their local institutions or certain individuals interested in collaboration. U3As were established by public libraries, culture centers, social assistance centers or lifelong education institutions (with about 30 by the end of 2000, the number of U3As grew up to about 130 during several following years). The number of U3As grew dynamically and in some of these institutions, the highest academic profile typical for the initial phase of their functioning changed. At the same time, it is worth to point out that the huge growth of the number of senior universities reflected the real needs of some members of the senior population.

The accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004 was also an important moment that influenced the functioning of the U3As. It meant new opportunities for international collaboration, attracting specific partners (foreign U3As) and exchange

of good practices. European funds obtained as project grants turned out to be an extremely important element of the functioning of these institutions. Since 2005 U3As could also take part in the contest to receive funds from the Polish-American Freedom Foundation (PAFF) which assigned significant amounts for the “Third Age Universities” program. The program manager was the Association of the Creative Initiatives “ę”³

An important step in the development of the U3Aa was also 2012, the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations in Poland. It initiated the first efforts to view the problems of older people from the perspective of the whole country. Two years later, the first nation-wide government’s 2014–2020 Programme for Participation of the Elderly in Society. It emphasized the role of the Polish U3As in activating the older generation. The programs that followed continued, complemented and expanded the first one⁴.

The 21st century has “rejuvenated” the U3As, attracting pensioners who have exercised the right to earlier retirement. Due to these changes, the offers of the existing and newly found U3As had to be verified, analyzed and modified. Education in the areas of a healthy lifestyle, globalization, the world of computers and all other media and electronic devices has become necessary to prepare seniors to navigate in the new reality. Foreign language classes (included in the curricula from the very beginning) had to be expanded and computer laboratories, courses, and training had to be redesigned to teach how to use electronic media.

From the very beginning, the U3As published various books, newsletters, guide-books, and special publications but this activity has expanded significantly. Many periodical magazines were launched as well as collective publications presenting the literary and artistic works of the students. With time, certain U3As have become the subjects of scientific monographs presenting the specific nature of these universities, their history, contributors, special events and chronicle records. Internet and social media are also used to promote the achievements of the students and the U3As.

The above-mentioned examples of changes are not exhaustive, however, they show the ongoing necessity to update and adapt the offer to the life situation of the older people and the reality.

The functioning of the Polish U3As has been based on the following principles: distinctness, autonomy, and self-governance. At the same time, they implement good practices of other partner institutions and, more and more often, adapt professional benchmark of operating and self-accreditation processes.

3 In this section the author refers mostly to her previous text: Konieczna-Woźniak R., *Uniwersytet Trzeciego Wieku* – entry in *Encyklopedia Pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, tom VI, T. Pilch (ed.), Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, Warszawa 2007, p. 1091–1097.

4 In 2018 there was a program launched: Social Policy for Older People 2030. Safety. Participation. Solidarity. <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/polityka-spoeczna-wobec-osob-starszych-2030-bezpieczenstwo-uczestnictwo-solidarnosc>

To summarize, U3As offer seniors the ways to spend their free time on learning, in an active and healthy way, in the company of their peers. As the scientific and research institutions, U3As diagnose the needs and expectations of their students, conduct research into the issues related to older people, organize conferences, congresses and seminars, and train staff to work with seniors. One can say that they try to implement the gerontology prevention program.

Polish U3As today – overview, critical view, discussion, and new solutions

Polish universities for seniors are surely the most recognized space where older people can learn. Active seniors are often identified as U3A students, even though these individuals are active in many other areas and U3A is only one of them. However, we need to point out that despite growing popularity, participation in U3A offers is still an exclusive activity. It is worth to refer to several exemplary results of the research conducted by the Central Statistical Office in 2018.

At present (GUS, 2018), seven out of ten U3A students are 61–75 years old, only ten percent are older. Half of the students have secondary and more than one third – higher education. Eight out of ten students are already retired. Professionally active persons consist of barely 4.3% of the students. Others are pensioners. The unemployed are only individual cases. Other studies (Zoom na UTW, 2012; Fabiś & Łacina-Łannowski, 2013; GUS, 2015) prove that U3A students form a very feminized group as only 14–15% of them are men.

According to the data by the Central Statistical Office, in 2018 in Poland there were 640 Universities of the Third Age. More than half of them function within the NGO structure. However, says GUS, *“the universities which exist more than 20 years are only 4% of all the Universities of the Third Age. Most of the existing units (44%) were founded in the years 2006-2010. Until then, the number of U3As in Poland had been regularly growing. However, in recent years, this trend slowed down and in the years 2011-2015, there were only 145 new universities opened”* (GUS, 2015).

Only 21.5% of the U3As were part of the structure of a university and 17.7% were organized by culture centers. Others were managed by lifelong education centers, libraries, foundations and even units coordinated by city halls or municipalities.

The psycho-social development of the aging and old persons set as the goal of the U3As determines their main roles:

- educational – expand students’ knowledge in many areas, play an important role in gerontological prevention and stimulate activity
- psychotherapeutic – improve mental wellbeing, prevent isolation and pathologies resulting from loneliness and the sense of being useless
- integration – strengthen social interactions, promote self-help and initiation of new relations, facilitate contacts with both, peers and people from different generations (Konieczna, 2000, pp. 209–212).

Functions identified years ago are still relevant but it is also worth to add the contemporary ones as they reflect the cultural context of the second decade of the 21st century.

One such functions are the ludic role realized through: fun, recreation, leisure and other activities aimed at providing pleasure. The world of pop culture does not exclude older generations. Subjects like: fashion, food, new challenges, discovering the beauty of new places are included in the curricula of the modern U3As. These trends are confirmed by GUS surveys.

According to GUS data from 2018, the main educational activity performed at U3As were lectures – about 97% of the institutions regularly held lectures and seminars, most often weekly. Even though the data from 2015, from the analysis of 4 forms of activities: lectures and seminars, regular classes, cultural events, and social activity, prove that “the most often form were cultural events organized by 98.7% of the U3As. Engaging seniors in social activity and allowing them to make social interactions was connected mainly with the organization of special events, for example, Christmas Eve, New Year’s or St. Andrew’s Day party (88.1%). Trips and tourist events were also very popular (87.3% of the U3As). Trips to the cinema or theatre were almost as popular (79.7%). More than half of the respondents were engaged in the organization of field events (66.2%), dancing parties (54.1%) and shows of the dance or theatre sections – 51.9% (GUS, 2015). An additional offer is a wide range of courses and training. The most popular ones are computer and other related to the use of new technologies, and language lessons. The choices of the students confirm this tendency, as the vast majority focused their additional activities around the three areas: computer and language courses, and sport. Art-related activities: visual arts, dance, and crafts were also very popular. Seniors also willingly engage in tourism and recreation.

From the very beginning, women consist of the majority of the U3A students. In all the studied U3As in Poland, there were 113.2 thousand students, out of which 95.4 thousand were women.

The programs, forms of work, organization, and functioning – in other words, the shape of the university- are most often tailored to the environment and the organizational and didactic abilities of a certain unit.

The structure of the U3As is, in turn, very alike and standardized, especially in the case of the U3A associations. The highest authority is the Annual General Meeting which determines and adopts the directions of actions, yearly didactic and financial plans. The AGM resolutions are then implemented by the Board; there is also the Student Disciplinary Panel which investigates and decides the cases of breaking the provisions of the statute, rules, and resolutions by the U3A members and authorities and resolves disagreements regarding the U3A activity. The role of the Audit Committee is the overall control of the didactic and financial activity.

The U3A activity if financed by the U3As themselves (membership fees) and different supporting institutions. The money is also obtained from foundations, grants, projects and local governments.

The main teaching method used at Polish U3As are lectures which are held once or several times a week. With every year though, the offer of activities in different sections: thematic, artistic, sport, interest clubs, teams or language groups increases. There are also trips and more and more students participate in cultural events, artistic groups, holidays or special meetings.

U3As do not hold exams, there are no grades and diplomas, some universities issue documents to confirm the membership. However, more and more often, they recruit students. This results from the great interest in these institutions and their limited capacity to accept all candidates.

The history and the presence of the U3A is connected with change. Today this notion is very often fundamental in the descriptions of the postmodern reality. Change seems important for the evaluation of the functioning of the universities of the third age, which is confirmed in the constructive criticism and discussions over their further development. In the 21st century politicians, economists, adult educators, gerontologists, sociologists, psychologists, and other researchers, media representatives and, first of all, practitioners (as well as students) directly involved in the functioning of the U3As began to take interest in these institutions. Thus, some critical evaluation of the existing universities for seniors is inevitable (see Klimczuk, 2013) and it may provide grounds for further development of the idea of studying at U3As. As contemporary Polish U3As are criticized for abandoning the university traditions, mainly by separating themselves from the academic structures, then it needs to be highlighted that despite many U3As functioning in the structures of the state, local or NGO administration, the main idea of the U3A – regular academic lectures delivered by academic staff – has been kept. Second, P. Vellas postulated that students are to get involved in the organization and implementation of the activities addressed to seniors. Today, this task seems to be even more difficult than back then, however, it does not mean it should be ignored and engaging also middle-aged (e.g. early retired forty-year-olds) and even younger (e.g. the unemployed, on maternity leave) adults also seems worth considering. If U3As are to be more common – and their elite character is also a strong charge against them – then expansion outside the academic centers and beyond the “third age” seems to be even necessary to ensure the inclusion of seniors.

One can also consider the relevance of the names of the analyzed educational institutions. Even though the name “University of The Third Age” has become common, some countries use completely different terminology, for example, *Seniorenuniversität* (Germany, Switzerland). In Poland, there are also *universities of every age*, *senior academics*, etc. The name U3A is a reference to the idea by P. Vellas, focused on supporting individuals in their old age, which is a hallmark of the initiative gathering active seniors. It adds prestige to this group and successfully removes the negative age-related stereotypes. For the persons who have had no opportunity to develop themselves in the institutionalized forms of education the U3A offer is undoubtedly a chance for self-fulfillment and gaining higher self-esteem. The activity of these educational units

defends itself and the program determines the character of the chosen educational solutions. The division into the third and fourth age (plus students younger than 60) only means the need for a deeper diagnosis of the needs of all members of the U3A community, the diagnosis which would consider the oldest and the youngest. However, the division according to age and the place of U3A's activity and its affiliation, the name or assumed prestige related to the U3A tradition seem to be the secondary issues. Educational needs of students should be the point of reference in developing the U3A curricula and they should, at the same time, open the space for non-formal education activities. Thus, there are separate academic sections in the U3A structure for those who expect interactions with the people of science and participation in discussion groups or scientific research. But the activities outside the U3A buildings are also necessary as they represent education without a strict framework and professional assistance, activities focused on entertainment or physical wellbeing. Without a doubt, the U3As must and become institutions supported by modern technologies used both, as learning tools and the platform for integration, especially the intergenerational one.

The new approach to the U3As seems to be justified by the following, unquestionable facts: the role of the new information and communication technologies and new media has been growing – this refers particularly to the Internet which enables social integration of seniors, teleworking, e-volunteering and e-services. But in the highly developed countries, there are already programs like “from the Internet to robotics” which is also important for the quality of life of seniors, as emphasized in the UN policy as the concept of the “society for people in every age”. The new model of society and economy is built on creativity and wisdom, which generate changes in the required cultural competencies, strengthen the role of imagination, creativity, responsibility, and experience. These are the conditions where not only the paradigm of active but also creative aging is being developed (Klimczuk, 2013). This last argument, in particular, is supported by the concept of design thinking. The economic and political aspects of creative aging are very important in the dynamically aging societies but they are even more convincing when supported by the arguments posed by gerontologists and adult education experts. According to Marcin Muszyński whose opinion is formed on the grounds of critical gerontology, especially the conclusions of Marvin Formosa and theoretical concepts of Paul Freire and the Frankfurt School, “...*many curricula do not refer at all to this postmodern vision of senior education, which should focus on redefining the identity in the old age and the ability to re-invent self. Postmodernism requires permanent self-actualization, an ongoing re-defining one's own existence. Such education should feature many teaching and learning styles. The goal is to meet diverse needs of learning seniors*” (Muszyński, 2016, p. 91). The author emphasizes that the existing approach places older people as receivers whereas emancipating role (connected with the new approach) abandons the traditional vision of senior education where teachers share their knowledge and skills with the students. Older people are not only retired persons who deserve to rest, subject to negative stereotypes and released from their

activities and creativity. From the postmodern perspective, an old person is the author of their biography which they construct in the lifelong process (see also Dubas, 2008).

The widely understood and omnipresent change affects also older people and, consequently, the U3As (see Orzechowska, 2008). These and other institutions in our country have taken certain steps in recent years, which may prove they attempt to meet the new challenges. Some of these steps have been already briefly mentioned herein, some – selected – are listed below:

- In 2005 the Polish-American Freedom Foundation began to support financially the activities of the U3As which received grants for further development and employing the potential and creativity of seniors.

- In 2007, the Polish Federation of the University of The Third Age Associations was established. The Federation set the formal-legal and didactic-organizational U3A standards. It also entered into a collaboration with external entities and published (among others) the “Operating Standards of the Universities of The Third Age in Poland”, provides training, counseling and certification visits, grants “Professional U3A” certificates, organizes congresses, raises funds and participates in projects. It collaborates with the Polish U3As abroad and AIUTA.

- Announcing 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations in Poland resulted in many further decisions. During the whole year, there were conferences and seminars held, focusing on seniors. The Foundation National Agreement of the Universities of the Third Age was established, which organizes U3A congresses, collaborates with different partners and participated in senior-dedicated projects. Also, the Senior Policy Council operating by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was appointed.

- In 2015, the Civic Parliament of Seniors was formed on the initiative of the biggest and most representative senior environments, that is U3As (represented by the Foundation National Agreement of the Universities of the Third Age and the National Federation of U3A Associations), Polish Union of the Retired, Pensioners and People with Disabilities.

- For years the U3As have been lobbying different environments to join the efforts of activating seniors and promoting the senior policy. They work with different organizations in their local communities.

Characteristics of Polish U3As

Finally, we should characterize the functioning of the Polish U3As. Diverse activities features, forms and solutions implemented in certain U3As excludes a single model which could be recognized as typical “Polish” one. However, we can list several characteristics which refer to the present U3A movement in Poland:

- Pluralism understood as diversity, multitude and the right to express individual beliefs. It refers mainly to the formal and organizational aspects of the functioning of

single units. Thus, we have the traditional entities established by the academic centers, which determine the ways of recruiting their students, employ lecturers with academic degrees and are founded by the authorities of the given university and supervised by its representative. On the other side, we have usually smaller units established at the initiative of the direct stakeholders, which use the existing infrastructure and function as part of local associations, culture centers or even fire stations. They are completely independent and rarely use the services of academic staff. They realize completely different curricula which usually are the results of the work of a special group of people selected for this purpose.

- Autonomy means that delegates and decisive bodies are free in their decisions and are selected on the self-rule basis.

- Elitism – a feature referring to the U3A students. Despite their availability and easy participation, the students are mainly more emancipated seniors who live in bigger cities or smaller towns, are better educated, better situated and read more than an average senior (Fabiś & Łacina-Łanowski, 2013). Even though the number of students grows with every year, 113 thousand participants in 2018 mean a small percentage of people aged 65 and more (the population of which amounts up to almost 7 million). The barriers may include the fees required by the organizers but also the proximity of the U3As from the place of living, though we cannot exclude psychological and cultural barriers either.

- Innovation, flexibility and openness characterize the U3A curricula. The organizers are open and whenever possible they reach proper didactic staff to meet the need of the students. Apart from the traditional lectures and language courses, the offers contain many original options.

- Openness to the present changes in the functioning of the U3As as well as changes that may come. Senior will change: the level of their formal education, their aspirations, expectations, and lifestyles. Activity, creativity, and entrepreneurship seem to be the characteristics which will require even greater involvement in the U3As, the involvement of their coordinators, boards, program committees, federations or associations, as well as the personal commitment of the students. The engaging nature of learning is an important feature in adult education in the 21st century.

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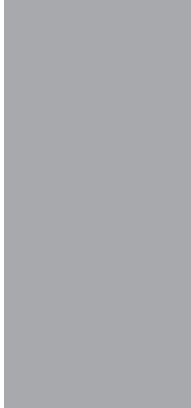
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Prevention of marginalization of older people

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Abstract

In search of optimum patterns of the prevention of marginalization of older people, this article outlines some European models of educational projects of universities of the third age, aimed at their multifunctional activity related to compensation of social deficits connected with crossing the threshold of the retirement age. By signaling problems related to the growing demographic old age and the functioning of a negative stereotype of the third tierce of life, an attempt is made to show the main directions of actions, which – in the framework of the personalization of individuals through education – should be adopted to reduce and hamper the phenomenon of growing social marginalization of the population of old people.

Introduction

In accordance with the interpretation predominant in countries of the European Union, social marginalization is identified in the situation of a break-up of social ties, irrespectively of causes - in cases of exclusion from social structures or the loss of the possibility of participation in the life of social groups, communities, inability to use public institutions, inability to establish varied social interactions which stimulate development. Treated as a refusal of the acknowledgment of definite public rights, or as the lack of possibility of making use of them, it may affect in equal measure the unemployed, homeless, handicapped, intellectually retarded, as well as people who

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leave penal institutions, and people with low education, helpless, incompetent, poor, devoid of access to institutions of public life, or those marked with a specific stigma of uselessness, the so-called “asocial” individuals. The search for optimum patterns of the prevention of further marginalization of the human capital, which is accumulated in the population of people retiring from professional activity in the period of Poland’s adjustment to European standards is, therefore, to be recognized as an extremely important challenge of the present time.

Social marginalization of older people

From the Reports On Social Development in Poland, prepared by UNDP within the framework of the Programme of the United Nations for the Development, old age in Poland is neither worthy nor even active. The majority of the population entering the threshold of the retirement age² is menaced by poverty and various handicaps. In the light of the next Reports (Raport UNDP, 1999; 75 in.; Human, 2011; Ranking, 2019, p. 1–18) every tenth Pole in the retirement age had income below the poverty line, and the threat of poverty grew proportionally to age (Trafiałek, 2014, *passim*; Report, 2002, p. 6).

The marginalization of older people has different sources and symptoms than that in the case of young people, potentially able to work. A readable signal of its occurrence in public life, in institutions of culture, rest centers, in tourist offices, in theatres, cafes, restaurants, in media, in private and outpatient health clinics, and even in shops and services is the absence of elderly people. The elderly are absent where life pulsates, where contact with people improves mood, not because they are not interested, and that they prefer “doing nothing”, or just staring for hours at the tv screen, or watching people from their window, but because they cannot afford or simply they are afraid of the contact with the incomprehensible external world.

Poverty combined with limited efficiency of the old age, with threats of sickness, and often with loneliness too, creates a sufficiently extensive space for isolation and exclusion of this social group. When the above-mentioned deficits are accelerated by psychological, physical, technical and informational helplessness, a feeling of confusion and uselessness, as well as the fear of the incomprehensible progress of the world which promotes youth, enterprise, and mobility - social marginalization becomes inevitable. It’s constant forecasting in the course of gerontological analyses, interviews and evaluations (Trafiałek, 2002, p. 179–196; Human, 2011, *passim*) allows to state that the social policy faces the magnitude of great challenges, and coping with them requires intensive strategic actions orientated towards community activation, education, integration, compensation, competency reinforcement and co-operation on all the possible levels of public dialogue.

2 In 2018 people aged 60 and more made 24,8%, and those aged 65 and more 17,0% of the total population, GUS 2019, Statistical Yearbook 2018, GUS, Warsaw, p. 208.

Universities of the third age in Western Europe-selected models of compensatory actions in the countries of West Europe the care for a good mental condition of the elderly is expressed by the openness of the educational system, creation of integration centers, engagement of the elderly in self-help activity, activation of the local community, co-operation with the generation of young people, travel facilitation, access to culture, and first of all assurance of access to health care, rehabilitation and resources, which enable the elderly to realize their extensive needs. The most popular form of prevention of the marginalization of the third generation is engaging them in the activity of educational centers, commonly defined as the "Universities of the Third Age".

There are 257 such centers in the United Kingdom, with a membership of over 40,000 (in 218 centers in England alone); in France, the number of centers is 304; in Italy 282; in Spain 52; in the Czech Republic 47; in Finland 28; in Switzerland 25, in Holland 24. In the late 1990s, the International Organization of Universities of the Third Age (AIUTA) listed over 1200 Universities of the Third Age in Europe alone (Halicka, Halicki, 1999, p. 24; Czerniawska, 1999, p. 308).

Generally, in the countries of West Europe, permanent education is treated as an activity which brings advantages both to individuals and the whole society, as the condition of social development, a form of counteraction of unemployment, as a new lifestyle and an effective method of liquidating the feeling of social isolation (Białyżył, 2019, s. 124–129). In most European universities of the third age, the integrative function often achieves a higher rank than the educational function. Integration itself is treated in European standards as both an intra- and intergenerational process.

For example: in Great Britain, self-help groups and primarily voluntary work are predominant among educational forms addressed to the elderly. In England, educational work is focused mainly on usefulness, training and practical actions, which does not collide with the general accessibility of education, and it favors breaking a negative stereotype of old age characterized by attitudes based on claims. Education centers and open universities that operate in England and Wales, as well as open universities, treat adult education as an efficient social movement that meets the needs of both individuals and communities. All forms of educational activity of elderly people combine the educational function with the integrative one, a higher priority being given to the latter.

In Germany, three types of centers function for seniors, and all of them apart from performing the educational function, have an integrative character. They include popular universities, training centers, academies for seniors and institutions of higher education open for everybody (Halicki, 2000, p. 52–110). At least two of the above-mentioned forms optimize co-operation and intra- and intergenerational integration.

In Italy, where the highest demographic old age was recorded in Europe in 2000 (18% of the total general public are people at the age of 65 years and more), and the level of education of the oldest generation is very low (in the category of age of 65 years and more 10% is complete and functional illiterate people, and in the age range above 50 years over 80% of the population has only elementary education) – this popula-

tion is treated as a priority group receiving special care of the authorities of all ranks. Educational institutions carry out many special educational projects, but the highest priority is attributed to initiatives that serve the development of the local community and the promotion of individuals. Many programs are aimed at the stimulation of cognitive processes of the representatives of the oldest generation, encouraging them to broaden their knowledge, but generally, the highest priority in education is given to affiliational and integrative functions. The main objective is, therefore, consolidation of suitable attitudes towards old age, acceptance, activeness, support of social status and a good frame of mind (Statistical Yearbook, 2001, p. 615; Czerniawska, 1996, p. 67–80).

Elderly people are treated in Italy as the rock of experience, tradition and universal values. Of great importance in proposals addressed to them is intergenerational integration, co-operation in the relation lecturer - student, analysis of initiatives and individually formulated self-assessment. Their awareness of history is being shaped; they begin to understand better their own old age, they are assisted to find a satisfying and feasible occupation which will be useful for the community. Universities of the third age enroll even people who are a little over 30. People aged 60 and more make up only 40% of the total, which testifies about a full intergenerational integration, accomplished in Italy in educational forms. Despite a low level of education, Italian senior citizens are some of the best organized socially active groups. They have their discussion forum on the columns of nationwide newspapers; they also have active trade unions; they can fight for their rights and they know their value. Generational and intergenerational integration in Italy deserves special attention because a well-organized activity gives a feeling of social usefulness, solidarity, and protects elderly people from loneliness and isolation, and guarantees prestige.

The marginalization of the third generation is reduced by both proper education and activation. In Great Britain adult education has a character of an efficient public movement, which engages the elderly in self-help, intergenerational, and voluntary actions, development of social needs and personality. In Germany international tourism is popularized with success. In Italy, where the group of elderly people is treated as preferential, some adequate strategies of the activation of individuals, territorially diverse and appropriate to needs, are applied by making an opportunity of active creation of the life of the local community. Generally, actions based on assumptions that the elderly, who have ample life experience, cultivate tradition and care for national identity, deserve special attention.

Universities of the third age in Poland – current state and needs

Polish universities of the third age started to come into being in 1975. The chain of universities, comprising at present 640 centers (in 2011 – 185 centers) is treated as a special congregation of elites of seniors, as they are as a rule the only forms of organized education and social integration addressed to the elderly in Poland (Universities,

2019, p. 1–7.). The centers which function within the structure of academic education have the richest tradition and experience in effective coping with the needs of the representatives of the third generation. They constantly extend their programs and they enjoy growing popularity both among persons in the retirement age and those who for different reasons (often due to unemployment) have abandoned professional activity. In accordance with the expectations of students, they have an open character, filling an enormous social demand for lifelong education in their communities, integration, consolidation, intra- and intergeneration co-operation, compensation, support in the preparation to old age and optimum use of potential, which it carries.

Activity, supporting mobility, efficiency which generates the feeling of psychical wellbeing, in dependence of the range and character, may fulfill manifold functions: compensatory in the situation of the loss of important public roles; educational, adaptive, revitalizing and integrative. However, it always serves to satisfy the psychophysical needs connected with age, with undertaking new roles and social and family assignments; with the necessity of adaptation to limited physical efficiency; with the need of developing attitudes that facilitate understanding and internalization of the new determinants of the quality of life.

Conclusion

At the threshold of the 21st century, old age, being the natural stage of life, cannot be perceived through the perspective of the stereotype no future. This is a new occupation, a new role, and a new assignment, to which one should not only get prepared, but one should also constantly improve oneself. This is the essence of individual responsibility and the basis for disseminating the idea of education for old age, in accordance with the principles of democracy, personalization of individuals through education. From the social point of view, the problems of old age are always related to the lack of good patterns of conduct, with the lack of alternatives for loneliness, helplessness, and marginalization. Solutions applied in West European countries show that the best alternative is the endeavor to socialize the aging process, promote lifelong education and to implement the passwords “Add life, health, and activity to years”.

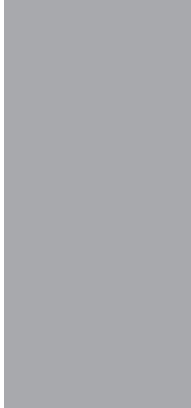
The activity of elderly people, orientated to the prophylaxis of social marginalization, irrespective of its various forms (educational, affiliational, integrative, protective, compensatory), always exerts influence on the improvement of the quality of life, on the co-operation with the community, on the improvement of the psychophysical condition of individuals (Białyżyt, 2019, p. 124). In countries with rich traditions of varied adult education, one can notice an endeavor to achieve the personalization of individuals, to emphasize the role and the rank of individual choices of potential recipients. Its objective is to create stable foundations of a community based on social justice, equality, solidarity, activity and the right of dignified life in its all stages. All

forms of social activity of the representatives of the third generation are subordinated to the satisfaction of needs which appear together with the termination of professional activity and change in social status.

Demographic old age has become at present a ubiquitous phenomenon, and as it results from demographic forecasts, at least by the year 2050 it will be manifested by an increasing tendency. The highest rate of social aging occurs in Japan, the United States, Canada and in the countries of Western Europe, but most of these societies have managed to outdistance changes occurring within the demographic structure; therefore, it is worthwhile to conclude their experience.

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Folk High School as an educational alternative for older adults²

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Key words: Alternative Education, Folk High Schools, Lifelong Learning

Abstract

There is just one challenge for the 21st Century person, and it is an omnipresent change. In order to exist successfully and effectively in such a reality, one should constantly develop and also take part in an educational process (formal and informal). A huge number of places direct their educational offer to seniors and use this alternative education, which is, on the other hand, often thought to be directed to children. In the author's opinion, a form of alternative education for adults and seniors is a folk high school in its contemporary version. That thesis is being discussed in this chapter.

Introduction

As the population of senior citizens has been growing in Poland (as well as in the whole of Europe) for at least a decade, as observed, and the average life expectancy lengthens, andragogists continually ask themselves about changes which take part in the educational area of senior citizens.

The postmodern world somehow makes every man and woman, at every age, take up the initiative in the field of education, so senior citizens are no exception here. Talking about education nowadays one does not only bear in mind acquiring new knowledge or skills, but also expanding expertise mastered before, teaching inwardness, creative thinking and forming communication competence. Augustyniak writes that “today

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adults learn different things using other forms and methods of work” (Augustyniak, 2010).

So, it is possible to assume that searching for alternative forms of education in order to make an offer for the discussed age group attractive ones and fulfilling their needs and expectations is the main aim of the present and future education of senior citizens.

Therefore, the aim of this chapter is a presentation of contemporary folk high school as one of the educational alternatives for senior citizens. The Kashubian Folk University and its project entitled: “Wandering Folk University for Senior Citizens” is an example of the folk high school that runs its educational business for this exceptional age group.

A senior citizen, who is he?

In everyday speech, a notion “senior citizen” is interchangeably used with such terms as an elderly person, grey beard, retiree, pensioner or an old citizen. However, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the term should not be used interchangeably, although it lacks explicit definition, as it is used to describe one of the stages of human life which are adulthood/ senility.

In andragogical and gerontological literature it is possible to find at least a few classifications of a mature person’s stages of life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), we can talk about young-old (aged 60–75), middle old (aged 75–90) and very old (90 and older). Dubas (2007), on the other hand, divides adulthood into its pre-adulthood (18–25 year of life), early adulthood (25–40), middle adulthood (40–60/65 year of life), late adulthood (60/65–80 year of life) and senile adulthood (over 80 years of age). It is also worth underlining that the time of senility, as a stage of life, is nowadays 30–40 years and researchers pointed out the need of dividing this stage into two or three phases (the third or fourth age or young, middle or late senility) (Bugajska, 2015).

Due to a lack of unambiguous definition of the term “senior” in modern andragogical and gerontological literature, in this chapter, the above word will be used concerning people over 60 years old.

It is worth mentioning that scholars describe senility in its numerous aspects. Therefore, we talk about calendar, mental, social, biological, economic or legal age. Such a broad range of issues causes a lot of terminological and methodological problems.

Alternative education

According to a “Contemporary Polish Language Dictionary” edited by Dunaj, the word “alternative” means “possibility or necessity of choice between two preclusive things or courses of action” (Dunaj, 1996). However, when I used the word alterna-

tive in the title of this chapter I was not driven by the lexical meaning of the word, but I was rather referring it to a paradigm of an alternative school (Kupisiewicz, 2010).

My understanding of the alternative education, is similar to the one by Konarzewski, who wrote that “alternative in this nonstandard meaning is the same as distinct from dominant forms. In the broad understanding of education, which includes both forms of practice and forms of thoughts, which justify the practice, alternative education would include all kinds of educational activities and thinking, which consciously differ from practice and theories dominant in the given time and period. Assuming that dominant forms represent the standard of the majority of the society, alternative education can be called “the education of the minority” (Konarzewski, 1995, p. 31). Then, folk high schools are, with no doubt, institutions of a minority nature, because they have never existed in mass numbers on the Polish territory. There have never been very many folk high schools, and the number of graduates has rather shown that some kind of elite attends there and the institutions are not places of common education.

So, what is the presented school or alternative education? In “Pedagogical Encyclopedia” edited by Pomykała one can read that “a constructive feature of this school, alternative towards the one called conventional or traditional, is its openness towards the surrounding things, the creative and enlightened, which makes students act unassisted, pushes them to unprompted cognitive activity, which shapes and develops their interests, fulfills their multifarious intellectual and emotional needs, teaches them self-study, stimulates group work, so summing up – it favors multilateral development of children, youth and adults” (Kupisiewicz, 1996, p. 784). It is another premise that determines folk high schools, according to the author of this chapter, as forms of alternative education. The fact, that folk high schools have always aimed at both: intellectual and emotional development of the student having an effect on him/her with “real words”, working in groups and living in dormitories, proves that. Significant pressure has also been put on self-studying and self-development during long courses. However, learning through practical action has favored multifarious and multifaceted development. So, referring Kupisiewicz’s words to education at folk high schools, it is possible to judge that it is the alternative education indeed.

Ten years later Kupisiewicz extends the above definition a bit and adds, that alternative schools are “educational establishments, where all – or only some – components of planned and systematic training are executed differently than in schools working according to typical assumptions of a traditional school. That is why the alternative idea of schools can be complete or partial” (Kupisiewicz, 2006, p. 85).

In a lexicon of Polish Scientific Publishers (PWN) “Pedagogy” edited by Milerski and Śliwerski, on the other hand, we encounter the expression of alternative bringing up, which is to be understood as “a kind of bringing up referring to different premises, rules, forms or contents from customary education or institutionally popularized in a given country or approved; a concept of alternative upbringing is not aggressive, so into educational alternatives, one can include pedagogical innovations, authorial

projects in upbringing and educational areas as well as strands which are absent or rarely encountered in existing educational practice” (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000, p. 13).

It is possible to notice that defining education/ upbringing/ alternative school has been described in literature both, in a broad way (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000) and a narrow one (Kupisiewicz, 2006). However, it is not so crucial “what” we exactly define the terms described, but the fact that “extraordinary power of educational alternatives is their endlessness, infinity, and permanence. There is not one alternative education against one conventional, traditional education. There will always be appearing educators or group initiatives, which will be aiming at asking for a different solution, other contents, forms or methods of introducing and conducting them in upbringing and educational practice” (Śliwerski, 2008, p. 9). The example is folk high schools, which have always been in opposition to traditional education because of their forms and methods of work. Moreover, the fact that “Schools for Life” have managed to survive for decades proves their uniqueness and social demand for both: such institutions and alternative education.

Seniors’ Education

A term education comes from Latin “*educare*” that meant to bring up and educate. So, education is “a generality of intergeneration influences serving forming entirety of man vital abilities (physical, cognitive, aesthetic, moral and religious ones), turning a man into a mature human being who consciously fulfills his aims, settled in the culture and capable of constructive criticism of contemplative positivity” (Milerski & Śliwerski, 2000, p. 58).

Due to the paradigm of whole life education spreading around, the need for older adults’ education development has been noticed. Just as Halicki states, seniors’ education should be understood in a broad spectrum; it ought to be learning any forms of knowledge, abilities, and basics, which may help to improve the quality of older adults’ lives (Halicki, 2000).

More and more numerous andragogical research projects (Czerniawska, Halicki, Fabiś, Dubas) prove, that the process of seniors’ educations can be considered in various areas: aims of education, needs of people who study, their motivation, possibilities of learning (biological, mental and social), forms, methods, contents, and measures, as well as sociocultural or civilizational conditioning (Dubas, 2007). As the topic of this chapter only relates to educational institutions for older adults, I will stick to this idea further on.

Nowadays, it is possible to name up to a dozen or so forms of older adults’ education in Poland, and the number is still growing. The most common institution among this age group is unquestionably the University of the Third Age. In Poland, the first one was set up in 1975 (Warsaw) and now there are 575 such institutions in the whole country, with 96 370 seniors studying there (data from academic year 2014/2015)

(CSO Central Statistical Office, 2016). It is possible to differentiate three “types” of the Universities of the Third Age in Poland: (1) educational establishments at universities; (2) establishments set up by associations, which perform popular science activity; (3) institutions at community centers, libraries or daily house of social support.

Another, important forms of seniors’ education are organizations that operate within university structures, and that means that senior citizens are a part of the academic life of high school. They take part in the lectures as “auditors”, special lectures, seminars, and conferences are organized especially for them. A good example of such a form of education may be the Szczecin Humane University of Senior (SHUS) operating within a Department of Szczecin Humane University, initiated by Bugajska (<http://shus.whus.pl/o-nas/>).

One is not to forget that institutions and organizations such as seniors’ clubs, seniors’ academies, associations, funds, libraries, rural hostess circles or local councils also run educational activities aimed at older adults. As I have already pointed out in this part of the chapter, the number of educational forms for older adults has been growing but it is not a reason to lapse into extreme enthusiasm, because as Trafiałek writes “demographic, old age rises much quicker than the development of educational activation institutions for seniors” (Trafiałek, 2005, p. 77). Therefore, it is necessary to remember that the popularisation of different forms of seniors’ education is becoming a peculiar challenge for present educational politicians.

Folk High School

Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, a Danish philosopher, a reverend, writer, and pedagogist, is thought to be a father of the folk high schools’ idea. He was the first one to present his idea of academic folk institution worldwide in an essay entitled “School for Life and Soer Academy” (Skolen for Livet og Akademiet i Soer) (Dam, Gaertner, 2008). That was in 1838, and seven years later in 1845 Christian VIII (Danish lord) passed a decree about setting up a Real High School in Soer, which was to realize Grundtvig’s ideas. However, the project failed. There were a few reasons for the failure, but the most important ones were: questioning both forms and methods preached by Grundtvig in those times; in fact, the Academy in Soer was aiming at young people, not adults; the “political” disapproval of M.F.S. Grundtvig; and the idiosyncrasy of “clergy” for the father of folk high school idea (Maliszewski & Pierścieniak, 2016).

As Świeżyński wrote in a quarterly “Promień” (“Ray”) in 1924 “the first folk university was set up in Roedding, Denmark in 1844 in the south of Jutland. Ludvig Schroder, Ernst Trier, Jens Nórregaard and had remarkable achievements in spreading the idea and setting up folk high schools. A teacher Christian Kold was also totally devoted to the idea” (Świeżyński, 1929, p. 100). The latter extended Grundtvig’s concept adding obligatory, communal living in a dormitory, sovereignty of students and introduced

a higher number of practical actions to educational schedules of “School of Life” to it (Wolert, 1939; Maliszewski, 2016).

As it comes out of the literature of education history, folk high schools became of great interest not only in the idea homeland but also in the majority of European countries and even on the North American continent.

For the first time, the idea of folk high schools came to Poland thanks to a priest Antoni Ludwiczak who entered the office in Dalki in 1921, and later in 1923 thanks to Ignacy Solarz who was in charge of the institution in Szyce and next in Gacia near Przeworsk (Maliszewski, 2003). The high schools above mentioned based their actions on the idea of Grundtvig pedagogy. However, the school directed by the priest Antoni Ludwiczak was promoting patriotic upbringing based on the Polish nation’s deep Catholic faith. He was convinced that “the main thought that led initiators of folk high school was the love of the homeland and the need to create patriotic citizens for the country. The same thought motivated us when we started the action of setting up Folk High Schools, and we even dare to say, that the development of these schools depends on these principles: religious and national ones” (Ludwiczak, 1929, p. 97). Thanks to such management philosophy of folk high schools, the priest Antoni Ludwiczak gave a peculiar character to institutions under the patronage of the People’s Libraries Society.

The second of the fathers of folk high schools (the first one according to educational historians) – Ignacy Solarz, also based his educational activity on M.F.S. Grundtvig assumptions, but he sorts of adjusted them to Polish needs and realities. A detailed educational plan and authorial pedagogic conception (often called “coiling”) let the institutions in his charge become phenomenal. Thanks to those features and features of his character – truly pedagogical one – Ignacy Solarz was able to influence people in rural areas strongly, and his deep faith in their intellectual potential enabled him to achieve remarkable pedagogic success. Moreover, it led him to become a known personality in Polish education history.

Since setting up the first folk high school in Poland, those institutions have been more or less popular, and their history has been chequered. There was a time when there were only a few such institutions in the whole country, but there was also time, the interwar period when there were up to 80 schools (Pilch, 2007). Despite that, folk high schools have never been as popular as they are in Denmark, Sweden or Germany.

So, what is a folk high school nowadays? Years ago, Ryszard Wroczyński defined those institutions as “high schools for folks, which gave rural youth a chance to learn the basics of folk and national culture. Through a peculiar pedagogic atmosphere – which included: living in a dormitory, alumnus social activity, artistic forms development: musical, vocal and theatrical - rural activists staff was trained and they were returning to villages where they became the initiators of social and cultural movement of the community” (Wroczyński, 1987, p. 165).

Nowadays it is difficult to get a clear-cut definition of folk high schools. We may presume that authors avoid giving a specific definition, and there are also voices that

there is a need for redefining folk universities. So, let me present an extract from “A Declaration of Folk University in Denmark”, where it is stated that “when educating, folk high schools should enable to connect fundamental human approach with practically useful knowledge and engaging in cultural and social issues” (Aegidius, 2016, p. 17). A Polish point of view should be added to this chapter, the one presented by Maliszewski and Rosalska in one of their papers where they write that “folk high school is a community of learners mounted in a democratic way, which gives the opportunities for development – both in personal and social area, it allows to use time wisely and flexibly choose forms of reaching various targets, and encourages community to contribute to the program” (Maliszewski & Rosalska, 2016, p. 11).

The modern view of the folk high schools in Poland shows a huge potential of these educational institutions for adults. Moreover, although now, there are only six folk high schools in Poland (based on my research), one can hope that the year 2016 could be beginning to a peculiar renaissance of those exceptional educational institutions. Hopes arose when Polish folk high school community (Folk High School National Network) and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage took up an initiative of framing a National Programme of Development Support of Folk High Schools (NPWRUL), which will be introduced in 2017 as a pilot program (Felska, 2016). The team working on this document has to create legislative regulations, which will aim to (similarly to Denmark, Sweden or Germany) regulate the functioning of “Schools for Life” in Poland, and to create general rules of their existence and operation.

Folk high school as an educational alternative for seniors on the example of the Kashubian Folk University

Grundtvig created the idea of a folk high school to oppose the Latin system of higher education. In that way “Schools for Life” became the educational alternative for adults. As we can read in the Pedagogic Encyclopedia “Danish variation of alternative school derives from school traditions endorsed by Grundtvig – dormitories and folk high schools, which were of crucial importance in the development of adult education in Scandinavia” (Pomykało, 1996, p. 786). Gołębiewski thought alike, years ago, he wrote that “folk high schools were set up as alternative institutions for schools and they protect their non-school profile until now” (Gołębiewski, 1999, p. 179).

As the analysis of literature in the field of education history shows, folk high schools had a crucial role in educational institutions for seniors already in the 1970s. Maliszewski even writes that “throughout the whole XX century different nations successfully experimented with opening their folk high schools to more and more students” (Maliszewski, 2010, p. 57).

Records in the literature and initiatives undertaken in that area in Poland prove the real openness of folk university communities to educate the eldest group of the society. A quote from Halicki from 2000 proves the former: “folk high schools have

been educating seniors since the 1970s. The first folk high schools for seniors have also been created as the departments of folk high schools” (Halicki, 2000, p. 55). Moreover, the latter one is proved by specific activities, such as an initiative called “Wandering Folk High School for Seniors” organized by Kashubian Folk University in Wieżyca. The first edition of this project took place in 2013, and the second one in 2016. The idea of “Wandering Folk High School for Seniors” is aimed at people over 60, living in Kartuski and Lęborski county (Borowska, 2016). Activists from Kashubian Folk High School phrased their offer in a way it would enable them to attract seniors who did not have an opportunity to enjoy educational offer in their local communities. As the originators, they underline that “Wandering Folk High School for Seniors” project: “was to become an attempt to answer seniors’ needs. As the main aim, we have pointed out the activity enhancement in the social life of older people living in the Kashubian villages – in particular motivating them to active participation in various forms of educational, cultural and social activity” (Maliszewski, 2016, p. 73).

Conclusion

From the perspective of the multiannual tradition of folk high schools operating for the benefit of the oldest age group, such as seniors, and from the analysis of the contemporary conducted initiatives, it is possible to say that “Schools for Life” are an educational alternative for seniors now as well as in the future. As Maliszewski states “when looking for current and future optimal educational solutions it is important not to forget numerous values, concepts well known from the history of education and pedagogy, the ones which served generations for consecutive decades of the XX century (and some of them even earlier) with really positive effect, because creative modification of tested educational patterns from the past, to prepare them to fulfill modern (and future) educational tasks may bring significant social effects” (Maliszewski, 2010, p. 52). Such a role the author of the chapter looks for in folk high schools, which, according to her, is a form of alternative education, also for senior citizens. Meeting social expectations, and also social needs folk high schools are somehow obliged to prepare their educational offer bearing in mind the seniors. A demographic forecast has been unambiguous for years and it shows that Polish society is getting older and older, and a lifespan in good health and intellectual condition lengthens, which means that educational institutions should prepare themselves to employ qualified andragogists and to adjust syllabuses to seniors. As the work on the National Development Support Program of Folk High Schools in Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (Felska, 2016) states, that the whole community of National Network of Folk High Schools notices that the group that is truly interested in the offer of the existing folk high schools are senior citizens.

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Małgorzata Rozenbajgier¹

Activation of the elderly in the local environment through participation in classes in the Inter-Neighbourhood Senior Activity Centres

DOI 10.24917/24500232.161.10

Keywords: activation, forms of activation, the elderly, motives for undertaking activity

Abstract

The article presents the results of research on the activation of the elderly in the Inter-Community Centers of Senior Activity. The aim of the study was to find out the opinion of seniors regarding their activation by participating in classes organized by Inter-District Senior Activity Centers. The research used the diagnostic survey method using the author's questionnaire. The research shows that seniors participate in educational classes learning computer skills and foreign languages as well as participate in lectures and lectures. Elderly people take an active part in sports activities and also develop their interests by participating in artistic activities. They actively participate in culture and sightseeing trips as well as play party and board games. However, the surveyed people postulate to increase the availability and diversity of the offer and adapt classes to the various needs of people with specific problems that characterize the elderly.

Introduction

Aging is a natural process that is gradually developing, as a result of which, on the one hand, the vital functions of the body progressively weaken, and on the other hand, new adaptive mechanisms are created. However, when considering aging as a developmental process, it should be noted that it is dynamic and can be considered on both biological, psychological and social levels (Rembowski, 1984, pp. 21–46; Kowalewski & Szukalski, 2006, pp. 152–153).

Old age is a natural and unavoidable stage of life in which there are significant changes in the physical, mental and social sphere of human functioning. Changes that

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indicate the aging process occur at different periods of life. The basic task of an elderly person is to adapt to changing living conditions and modify them to their own needs that change with age. Maintaining high physical, mental and social activity is one of the factors predicting longer life expectancy, enables the elderly to maintain autonomy and independence, and thus contributes to improving their quality of life (Rynkowska, 2016, pp. 91–92; Nowicka, 2006, pp. 20–22; Bień, 2006, pp. 42–46).

Activity is important at every stage of human life. In the case of old age, it is particularly important because it significantly affects human satisfaction and condition. Activity is a synonym of life, constant effort adapted to the capabilities of a given person (Dyczewski, 1994, p. 33). It is a condition of proper development, enables creative and harmonious living, is the basis for the treatment of many diseases, delays the aging process.

The activity of the senior includes many different factors. These include psycho-physical elements, as well as social and cultural conditions, changes taking place in the family and social relations, the disappearance of intergenerational ties and the disintegration of local, international or global communities (Rynkowska, 2016, p. 92; Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dzięgielewska, 2006, pp. 160–164).

Various forms of activity accompany people throughout their lives. Much attention is paid to the activity and activation of the elderly by including them in social life to combat social and digital isolation.

Activity is the basic human need and is a prerequisite for proper development, enabling a creative and harmonious lifestyle, and is the basis for the treatment of many diseases and is a factor delaying the aging process. It is such an area of activity that enables a person to express himself in an accessible and very individual form, defined by his predispositions, preferences, and habits (Kozaczuk, 1999, p. 25).

Activities include daily activities that are performed at home, at work, on the street, e.g. cleaning, shopping, preparing a meal. It can also be said that activity is, in other words, meeting biological and social needs. Activity is important at every stage of human life, but in the case of the elderly, it determines uniquely the quality, satisfaction, and condition of the senior life (Błaszczuk, Rynkowska 2016, pp. 12–28).

Activation “is a process which goal is to increase general and selective activity. General activation is generally understood as mobilizing the whole organism, while selective (targeted) activity means increasing the level of physical, mental, creative, sexual, professional, educational, religious activity” (Mielczarek, 2016, pp. 149–150).

The purpose of activating the elderly is:

- maintaining physical and health fitness: gymnastics, walking, exercises, rehabilitation,
- developing interests,
- stimulating the imagination, creative thinking, and action,
- learning to live in a group and in a local environment,

- shaping positive personality traits, everyday culture, ability to make contact with peers, neighbors, etc.,
- maintaining (or stimulating) faith in the meaning of life,
- independence, developing resourcefulness using various activities related to personal hygiene and developing hygienic habits (Leszczyńska-Rejchert 2010, pp. 13–26).

Activating seniors includes various forms of activity, including dissemination of education through Universities of the Third Age, computer and language courses, and by undertaking activities to physically improve seniors, as well as voluntary activities for the benefit of the local environment and promoting senior initiatives as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle (Kaczmarczyk & Trafiałek 2007, pp. 116–118).

Method

The aim of the research was to learn the opinions of the elderly regarding their activation through participation in activities organized at Inter-Neighbourhood Senior Activity Centres.

The research used the Diagnostic survey method with the author's questionnaire, which included open and closed questions. The leading research questions were: "What classes do you attend for seniors?", "Why do you attend classes for seniors?", "Why do you still study?", "What do you do for you?" "Are the classes organized for seniors?", "Are you satisfied with participating in these classes?". The surveyed seniors had the opportunity to make multiple answers and answer open-ended questions. 107 women aged 59–75 years were examined 90% of women are participants of the Inter-Community Centers of Senior Activity, therefore men did not participate in the study. The research was carried out in Lesser Poland in the urban environment in 2017–2018.

Results

Activation of the elderly in the local environment takes place through various forms of activity undertaken by the elderly in the environment of their residence. These are usually clubs for seniors or Universities of the Third Age. The conducted research allowed us to learn about the activity of the elderly attending various classes organized by inter-neighborhood senior activity centers. The obtained research results are included in the following table summarizes and presented in a graphic form.

Table 1. Activation of seniors through education

Answer	Respondents N = 107
Categories	L
Computer workshops	19

English	26
Lectures on health	39
Lectures/Meetings with interesting people	51

Source: Own research

Activation of seniors takes place through their participation in various educational activities. They participate in computer workshops (17.8%), learn English (over 24%) and also participate in various health-related lectures (over 36%) and lectures/meetings with interesting people (47.7%).

Scientific and economic development, as well as modern technologies and modern telecommunications, mean that everyone should continue to supplement their knowledge. Great demand in this area is visible in the elderly, who willingly take part in various classes and thus improve their skills and develop their interests. By taking part in computer classes, they will learn about the possibilities offered to them by the knowledge of how to use the computer, the Internet, messengers that can be used in contact with other people, with children or grandchildren, which is why classes dedicated to Gadu-Gadu and Skype messengers are very popular in computer classes as well as familiarizing with various places virtually (e.g. a museum) through the Internet.

Seniors are eager to learn languages and phrases that can be useful to them in everyday life and when traveling abroad. English phrases also appear in movies and are often translated into their native language. Seniors also willingly participate in lectures and speeches on various topics, often related to health or proper nutrition, etc.

Table 2. Activation of seniors through sporting activities

Answer	Respondents
Categories	N = 107
	L
Fitness	27
Swimming pool	39
Improvement classes with a psychotherapist	28
Dancing	45
Nordic walking	38

Source: Own research

Sports activities play an important role in activating the elderly. The multitude of proposed forms of activity encourages seniors to actively participate in them. Over 43% of seniors participate in dance classes, 36.4% of respondents attend the swimming pool and 35.5% participate in Nordic walking, and 25% of respondents also take part in fitness classes and improvement classes with a physiotherapist.

Physical activity has a positive effect on health, reduces the formation of diseases, strengthens the immune system. Also, it helps maintain healthy body weight. During physical activity, the calorie-burning rate increases, which reduces body fat and permanently maintains a healthy weight. Seniors by undertaking physical activity will improve their well-being and physical condition and strengthen muscle work, as well as improve brain work and the ability to remember. Such activity is also a good way to manage the free time of a senior who can spend time actively with the loved ones. Systematic exercises improve the appearance and mobility, which will have a positive effect on the self-confidence and self-esteem of the senior.

Table 3. Activation of seniors through artistic activities

Answer	Respondents
Categories	N = 107
De coupage	L
	17

Source: Own research

Artistic activities are a good form of activating seniors who take part in them (15.9%). Unfortunately, the costs associated with the preparation of materials limit access to this form of activity.

Artistic activities enable seniors to develop their artistic sensitivity, influence the development of imagination, thinking ability, prediction and also allow them to express themselves and maintain good manual skills.

Seniors also learn about the aesthetic values of art, implement their creativity and have the opportunity to express their emotional states. Artistic activities also help develop the creative abilities of seniors and their fantasies, which allows them to learn new solutions, implement new ideas and build their associations. These activities also provide the right dose of activity and a feeling of spending free time in a good and nice way.

Table 4. Activation of seniors through tourism

Answer	Respondents
Categories	N = 107
	L
Integration trips	35
Sightseeing trips	49
Campfire/campfire meeting trips	57

Source: Own research

Activation of seniors through their participation in various types of trips and meetings around the campfire is important. Over 32% of respondents on integration trips, and almost 46% on sightseeing trips. Over 53% of respondents participate in bonfire trips or bonfire meetings.

Participation of seniors in tourist trips brings them many benefits related to their well-being because they feel relief and renewal, as well as improvement of physical and emotional health and they also have the opportunity to engage in social interactions. They also broaden the horizons of thinking, build new relationships with participants of trips, develop their independence and break social isolation. The self-confidence of seniors and the ability to change their minds increases, they have the opportunity to move away from everyday routine and the reflection opportunity. These trips also enable learning of new content and exploring new places.

Table 5. Activation of seniors through the board and social games

Answer	Respondents
Categories	N = 107
	L
Scrabble	32
Chess	37
Checkers	29
Bridge	48
Rummy	41

Source: Own research

Board and social games are a good opportunity to activate seniors. Almost 45% of respondents play bridge and 38.3% play rummy. While 34.6% play chess, 29.9% play scrabble, and 27.1% of respondents play checkers.

Seniors experience many benefits through active participation in board and social games. Games strongly engage the participants, improve concentration abilities, develop logical thinking and the ability of prediction. They also develop the ability to think quickly and their perceptiveness, which is irreplaceable and necessary for seniors. Thanks to them, the risk of diseases related to memory impairment is reduced. They also have a positive effect on the imagination and creative thinking of the seniors. They teach healthy competition and respect for the game partner, as well as overcoming obstacles and various challenges. Thanks to games, seniors learn how to deal with losing. It will help them in the awareness that each game teaches: a better understanding of the rules of the game, the choice of better tactics of the game or it gives the awareness that the senior has taken the challenge and faced his strength. Thanks to games, seniors learn that winning is not always important, but having fun and spending time together is. The experience and skills acquired during board games will help seniors in other social situations.

Table 6. Activation of seniors through participation in culture

Answer	Respondents
Categories	N = 107
Going to the cinema	L
Going to the theatre	25
Going to the museum	13
	12

Source: Own research

Participation in culture creates opportunities for activating seniors. Over 23% of respondents go to the cinema, over 12% go to the theatre and over 11% of seniors go to the museum.

Participation in culture is an excellent form of activating the elderly because it allows them to expand their horizons, stimulate the curiosity of the world, stimulate imagination and creativity, and stimulate sensitivity so that seniors can develop in new directions. Participation in culture is an opportunity for unique experiences for seniors. By participating in culture, they can develop their knowledge, enrich their language, expand their interests, as well as improve their mood and have a good time.

Table 7. Learning methods for seniors

Answer	Respondents
Categories	N = 107
	L
Repetition	58
Making notes	54
Through exercises	45
Making attempts	31
Asking the lecturer questions	11
Asking the lecturer to repeat	9
Highlighting important information using colors	15
Through trials and mistakes	21

Source: Own research

Seniors' statements show that they present different ways of learning. 54.2% repeat new content, 50.5% make notes, 42.1% learn through exercises, 29% learn through trying. Seniors also learn through trials and mistakes (19.6%), asking the lecturer questions (10.25%), highlighting important information using colors (14%) and asking the lecturer to repeat the incomprehensible content.

Seniors learn by different methods, it can be learning through experience, trials, and mistakes, or solving problems or through repetition, consolidation, writing or obtaining information from others. Learning itself is a treasured value for them, that's why they want to learn and often do it systematically and accurately.

Table 8. Motives for attending activation classes for seniors

Answer	Respondents
Categories	N = 107
	L
To use free time	64
To maintain the physical and mental condition	37
To learn how to use a computer	10
To learn a new language	16
To be with others	38
To develop own skills	47
To meet interesting people	68

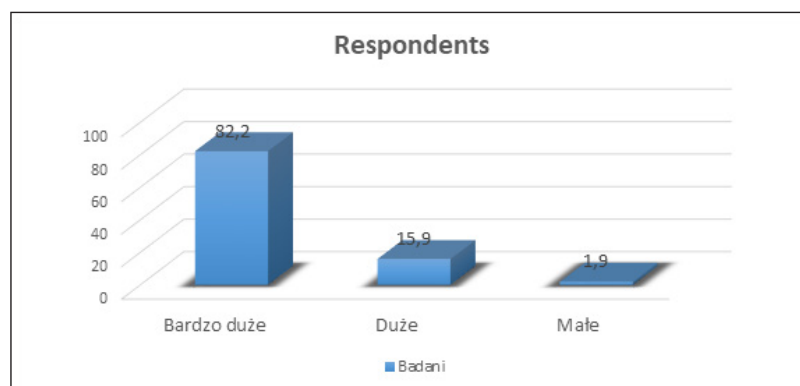
To spend time in an interesting way	73
Not to feel lonely	47

Source: Own research

The motives for seniors attending activating classes are different. Many seniors use classes to spend time in an interesting way (68.2%), to meet interesting people (63.6%), to use their free time (59.8%), to develop own skills and not to be lonely (43.9%) as well as to spend time with other people (35.5%), to maintain physical and mental condition (34.6%), to learn a new language (15%) and to learn how to use a computer (9.3%).

In the elderly, the main role in the educational process is played by internal motivation, which source is their curiosity about the world, interests or different needs. M. Knowles distinguishes four main factors, and the first factor is success – adults want to achieve a success in learning, the next factor is will – seniors want to have a sense that they are learning something valuable, thirdly value – adults want to be convinced that they are learning something valuable, and the last fourth factor is pleasure – seniors expect to learn to be a source of satisfaction for them (Knowles, Holton & Swanson 2009, pp. 23–42).

Chart 1. Importance of activating activities for seniors

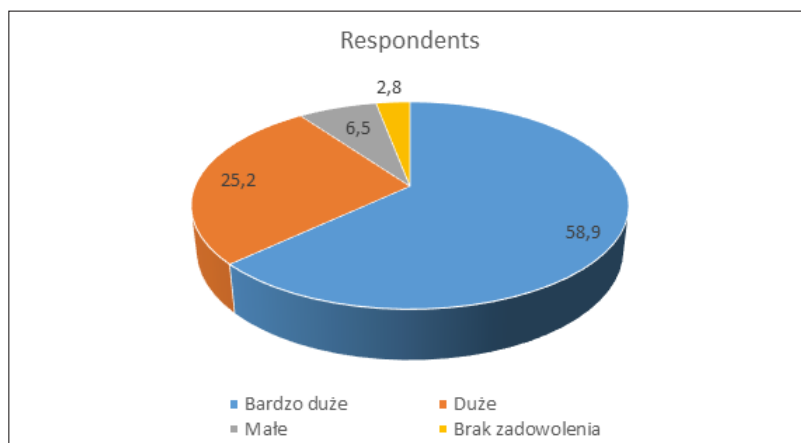


The importance of activation activities for seniors is very large (82.2%), large (15.9%) and small (1.9%).

Activation of seniors is especially important for every community because every senior wants to be independent and active as long as possible and relish and enjoy life to the fullest. Numerous studies show that the longer an elderly person is professionally or socially active and realizes his interests, the more satisfied and happy he is. He feels fulfilled and willingly undertakes and establishes relationships with others, is full

of optimism and faith in a better tomorrow. Seniors feel needed, have something to do and complain less about various health ailments.

Chart 2. Satisfaction of seniors with participation in activation activities



Over half of the seniors (58.9%) show great satisfaction with their participation in activation activities and 25.2% show a good level of satisfaction. Little satisfaction occurred in 6.5% of respondents, and 2.8% were dissatisfied (three people).

Conclusions

The respondents participated in numerous classes proposed by the Inter-Community Centers of

Senior activity. Seniors most often participate in lectures and meetings with interesting people (47,7%) and last often in computer workshops (17,8%). In sports activities, the elderly most often participate in dance classes (42,7%) and the least willingly in Fitness classes (25,2%). Elderly people participate most often in meetings around the campfire (53,3%) and the least numerous in integration trips (32,7%). Playing bridge is very popular for seniors (44,9%) and checkers are not popular (27,1%). Going to the cinema is the most popular (23,4%) and the least are going to the museum (11,2%). The largest group of seniors learns by repetition (54,2%) while the least numerous group (8,4%) asks the teacher to repeat the material. Elderly people most often participate in activities organized by the Inter-Community Centers of Senior Activity to spend time interestingly (68,2%) and the least numerous to learn computer skills (9,3%).

Active participation in classes is very important for seniors. Older people are very happy with these activities.

Seniors expect an increase in the number of centers, and thus in practice accessibility and to a greater extent adapt the offer of facilities to the diverse needs of older people.

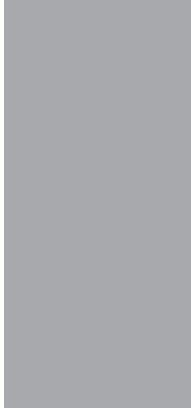
Elderly people who are often not completely healthy or physically fit would be eager to participate in physiotherapy classes.

In the field of education to old age, it would be advisable to bring the issues of older people closer to young people in education and upbringing programs and implement effective intergenerational integration. Elderly people could also provide advice and assistance.

An important postulate for geragogy would be to encourage older people and more widely people of different ages to help each other.

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METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Marcin Muszyński¹

Methods of reconstruction of theories of aging in Poland²

DOI 10.24917/24500232.161.11

Keywords: reconstruction of theories, theories of aging, genetic structuralism

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to present the methods of reconstruction of theories of aging, developed on a different socio-cultural ground, which are introduced to Polish readers. The basis for this analysis is the need to look at the effects of reconstructing the main theoretical perspectives in social gerontology in Poland. The topics discussed in the article seem important because the quality of reception of theories of aging has a significant impact on research. Better quality of theory reconstruction should result in their wider use, both in exploratory and verification studies, for example as a source of hypotheses, research questions, as well as explanation and understanding of the obtained data. The analysis revealed that in most cases the receptions presented in Polish gerontological literature are fragmentary, insufficiently described and their origin is not explained. They often lack critical comments. An analysis method has been proposed to increase the quality of new receptions of aging theories.

Introduction

In social gerontology, progress is measured by theories of aging, which should be treated as a hallmark of the collective competences of a given social group and are the mirror of the state of social development (Muszyński, 2011), they indicate the

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 - 2 This article in Polish has been published partially elsewhere: Muszyński M. (2019), Analiza recepcji teorii starzenia się w Polsce na przykładzie teorii aktywności i teorii wycofania, *Rocznik Andragogiczny*, 26, s. 171–187 and Muszyński M. (2015), Strukturalizm genetyczny, *Edukacja Dorosłych*, 1(72), s. 37–54.

relationship between individuals or aging population and social and economic institutions, both in the context of social stratification and as a factor in equalizing opportunities. They may indicate forces leading to the empowerment or disempowerment (of the population) of old people. Finally, they show the evolution of views on old age and aging (Timoszyk-Tomczak, Bugajska, 2012). They are also the basis for forming social policy, thus influence the development of norms and ways of playing available roles in old age (Bengston, Burgess, & Parrott, 1997; Muszyński, 2016a).

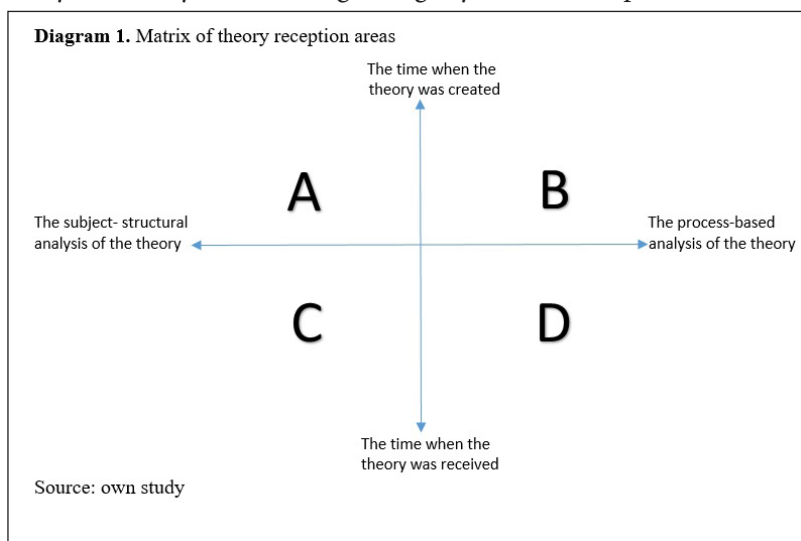
Many scientific publications in the field of social gerontology mention the entire catalog of various theories of aging (Chabior, 2000; Trafaiątek, 2006; Zboina, 2008; Szarota, 2010; Szmaus-Jackowska, 2011; Czekanowski, 2012; Bugajska, 2012; Worach-Kardas, 2015; Wrótniak, 2015; Pikuła, 2015; Konieczna, 2016; Grzelak-Kostulska, 2016; Krzysztofiak, 2016; Kubiak, 2016; Chabior, 2017). It seems that the basis of such presentations is (most often) implicit thesis about the complementary theories that together give a fuller insight into the processes of social aging. What's more, the presentation of the entire theoretical achievements of a given field shows that the presented knowledge is grounded and theoretical. It allows to get acquainted briefly with many theories of aging which show the intellectual richness of the scientific achievements of social gerontology but at the price of necessary shortcuts. A brief overview of different theories of aging can also be found in recognized publications used as academic textbooks (Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, & Dziegielewska, 2006; Fabiś, Wawrzyniak, & Chabior, 2015). Recently, there are more and more publications which present the context of the creation of a given theory (Timoszyk-Tomczak & Bugajska, 2012; Seredyńska, 2013) rather than list all more and less known theories of aging or focus on one theoretical perspective that is used to interpret the collected empirical material (Fabiś, 2018).

However, despite these numerous descriptions of theories of aging, there are still few studies in the Polish gerontological literature that exhaustively show the chosen theoretical perspective. The older publications include works by Dorota Techniczek (1968), Jerzy Piotrowski (1973), Maria Susułowska (1975, 1989), Józef Rembowski (1984), Barbara Tryfan (1993), Adam Zych (1995) and Bruno Synak (1999). The newer ones will include works by Jerzy Halicki (2006, 2017), Marek Niezabitowski (2007), Celina Timoszyk-Tomczak and Beata Bugajska (2012), Małgorzata Malec (2012), Danuta Seredyńska (2013), Marcin Muszyński (2016b, 2017 a, b, c), Paweł Brudek (2016) Katarzyna Winiecka and Adam Zych (2017), Celina Timoszyk-Tomczak (2017).

Therefore, the following questions arise: How are theories of aging reconstructed in Poland? and What is the status of their reception?

Answering the first question, it should be pointed out that the reconstruction of a theory of aging can be carried out in two intersecting continuums: on the one hand, it is formed by the subject-structural analysis of the theory vs. the process-based analysis of the theory. On the other hand, the time when the theory was created vs. the time when the theory was received. The subject-structural analysis allows to identify the

characteristics of the theory. It is relatively static and focuses on differences as compared to other theories. The purpose of the process-based analysis is to capture the changes that are taking place within the theory itself and against other theories. The analysis of the time of theory's origin focuses on detecting the conditions characteristic for the period when the theory was formed. Such cognition is static. In turn, the analysis of the reception time of the theory refers to many different ways of recognizing, interpreting, understanding and changing the studied theory, which penetrates and overlap one another. It shows the dynamics of changes that have taken place in theory over time. As a result of this division, four areas are created. The first, marked with the letter A, refers to the reception of the completed theory at the time of its creation (static description). In area B we deal with the description of the genesis of the theory at the time of its creation (dynamic-static description). The area marked as C refers to the reception of one of many modified versions of the theory (static-dynamic description). Whereas area D is a record of the process of changes that took place within the analyzed theory from the beginning (dynamic description).



The above findings help us understand how certain theories of aging are reconstructed in Polish gerontological literature. It seems that the most common analytical approach among Polish researchers is the reception of a completed theory at the time of its creation (A) and the reception of one of many modified versions of the theory (C). Reception of the genesis of the theory at the time of its creation is rarer (B), whereas reception in which the theory is presented with all the changes that have taken place since its creation up to its reception (D) is very rare. Hence a more general conclusion can be drawn that Polish receptions of theories of aging are more static than dynamic. While describing a theory, researchers are more concerned with its structure rather than the process. Take for example two classic theories of aging - activity theory and disengagement theory. The analysis of the original texts on the activity theory written

over several decades reveals that in its assumptions, this theory arises from a functionalist perspective, however, in the 1970s thanks to Bruce W. Lemon, MA Vern Bengtson and James A. Peterson (1972) the activity theory has been reformulated to fit the interactionist paradigm. Polish studies point to other theories, such as the theory of continuity (Synak, 1999) or competence theory (Szarota, 2010; Leszczyńska-Rajchert, 2005), which modify or complement the activity theory. However, it is one thing to begin to develop a given scientific perspective in a place where it could not withstand the strong pressure of criticism and another to show the affinity for other theories that refer to activity but were grounded on different assumptions.

Failure to show the changes that have taken place in the understanding of activity in gerontological theories over several decades has resulted in apparent contradictions in assigning the activity theory to different paradigms. It is no different with the disengagement theory, mistakenly considered outdated. Sharp criticism of structural functionalism has led to abandoning efforts to develop this perspective. The petrified form of disengagement theory is easier to reconstruct and criticize. Due to this, it is one of the best-reconstructed theories of aging (Techniczek, 1968; Niezabitowski, 2007). However, the results of analyzes focusing on the processual aspect of reception indicate a return to interest in disengagement theory among researchers (Achenbaum & Bengtson, 1994). The disengagement phenomenon has been included in one of the theories of aging most established in the gerontological literature, that is, the theory of selective optimization and compensation (SOC) by Paul Baltes (1997). This theory assumes that in the old age the balance between development benefits and losses gets disturbed and weighs towards losses. Therefore, to counteract this, the man responds to the limiting factors which accompany aging by abandoning activities that are less important to him (selection) and focusing on those that are most important at the moment (optimization). These aspects were ignored in Polish receptions.

Theory receptions are never perfect. Each of them is written from some perspective. It has to serve specific purposes. It is important to minimize distortions that cause discrepancies. Finding a balance between the particular methodological rigor, i.e. conducting systematic research according to the adopted procedure (Czakon, 2014), and methodological tolerance (Lakatos, 1970) understood as the attitude of openness towards new ideas, which may be particularly desirable in qualitative research (Muszyński, 2018) should result in better quality reconstructions.

As for the second question, it should be emphasized that although numerous references to various theories of aging in the Polish gerontological literature provide general insight into the main scientific explanations of the phenomenon of old age, the vast majority of the receptions are fragmentary, lacking descriptions and explanations of origins. This is a characteristic feature of many scientific publications that review the state of the theoretical development of social gerontology. There are often no critical comments. Rarely there is an exhaustive description of what given theory claims. Few exceptions only confirm the rule. This has certain consequences. This may prevent other

researchers from using theories of aging as the source of hypotheses, research questions and interpretative framework for the results obtained from empirical research. Descriptions of the presented theories of aging are often limited to two or three sentences, claiming to summarize many years of research or ongoing discussions which often brought surprising results. In research into aging and old age conducted in Poland, the authors often do not reveal their methods of analysis. To conclude this section, we can assume that the quality of reception of theories of aging has a significant impact on the research conducted. Better quality reconstructions of theories, which provide a conceptualization of concepts and operationalization in the form of sample research tools, should result in wider use of these theories, both in exploratory and verification studies.

Genetic structuralism – proposed method of reconstruction of theories of aging

Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (2000) assume that the attitude which is more appropriate for researchers is the one where they look for their way to solve research problems, instead of adopting predetermined methodological patterns of conduct. They think so because many interesting methods were developed by students or young researchers. Of course, the well-grounded “methodological” knowledge must not be underestimated, which is why specialized studies are a benchmark for making modifications that allow a thorough exploration of issues researchers take interest in. In this article, such a role was played by the project of reconstruction research using genetic structuralism by Wiesław Ciczkowski (1995), which was the inspiration for the following original proposal of theory reconstruction.

Stages of analysis

1. Reading the whole
 - a) “notebook” and research journal, translation
2. Reconstruction of the essence of the theory
 - a) a general outline of the theory,
 - b) analysis of the conceptual framework,
 - c) analysis of scientific statements,
 - d) analysis of the research methodology used,
 - e) stages of development/transformation of the theory – links with other theories.
3. The genesis of the theories analyzed
4. Reception of the theory in Poland

Stage 1 – reading the whole

When starting reconstruction research, one needs first read several times the materials that will be examined. This will allow discovering new relationships and hidden meanings, previously unavailable to the researcher. Reading the literature follows two rules. The first involves reading the text at least three times and noticing associations, observations, questions to the author, as well as answers and polemics (Kenneth, 2005). Notetaking may be useful in the research work. Insights regarding interesting issues can be written in notebooks which also serve as the research journal which allows capturing changes in the researcher's thinking about any interesting issues. The second rule is to use the imagination or the researcher's vision of the social world to understand the studied theory (Mills, 2005). This allows us to "see" between the lines.

Polish gerontologists benefit mostly from the theoretical achievements of the researchers from Anglo-Saxon countries, in particular, Great Britain. Therefore, we should mention the issue of translating foreign texts. Although many theories have already been translated by other researchers and described in many scientific publications, it is worth to refer to sources where possible, because it gives the opportunity to analyze texts in the language in which they were created and come into contact with knowledge in a non-mediated way. This may raise some questions or doubts, sometimes about such elementary matters as authorship, the year of the theory's origin or assigning thereof to a paradigm other than the one known to Polish readers.

If translating, the researcher should be aware of the basic assumption that two different languages are not similar enough to be the representation of the same social reality. The target text is not a mirror image of the source (Korzeniowska & Kuhiwczak 2005). The translation is entangled in the social context in which the reconstruction of the text takes place. It turns out that differences between languages affect the way of thinking. Moreover, random grammatical irregularities determine the way the world is perceived. This agrees with B.L. Whorf's assertion that language as a system (its grammar) is not a passive tool for presenting thoughts – it is itself a factor shaping thoughts, programming and directing individual mental activity, analysis of impressions and active synthesis of thought content (Whorf after: Opara, 2005). A similar analysis was conducted by Kuhn, who argued that: what a person sees depends both on what they are looking at and on what they had learned to see in their previous visual and conceptual experience. In the absence of this experience, we would only notice, as William James said, "a cacophony of sounds and colors" (Kuhn, 1968). Therefore, the source text must first be looked at in terms of the very meaning of the content presented in it, and then the interpretation is given to the text by the translator. It turns out that the meaning of the content contained in the text is not necessarily derived from the text but results from the translator's efforts to construct the meaning, and the way this meaning is constructed depends, among others, on social position, nationality, political affiliation or personal preferences of the translator. Thus, translation is not

a simple reproduction of the meaning conveyed in the source text (Korzeniowska & Kuhiwczak 2005).

This may be the cause of misunderstandings as to the legitimacy of the examples given and ways of understanding theories of aging by new generations of researchers who translate this content from foreign languages. Therefore, one should be careful when studying reconstructed theories, concepts, and ideas.

What is more, processing text, which means translating it from a foreign language, often refers to the existing translations. Searching for well-established knowledge and ways of understanding given concepts translated by other authors is even necessary and expected. This helps determine the best translation and proposes a new one where required. There is also a danger that existing receptions can have a very suggestive impact on the further translations in which content analysis is determined by the previous ways of presenting the topic. That is why we must remember that translating texts is a particularly difficult task in the research process, as it poses several challenges. First of all, a relevant source text must be chosen. One of the criteria is having knowledge of the field, research and theoretical concepts, and terminology used in the text selected for translation. It is very useful to know the previous works of the author. It is also important to answer the question if the translation should be faithful due to the content or the meaning? and how to verify if the translation is adequate? This last question becomes particularly important when the researcher assigns different meanings to texts already translated into the native language and which are part of the gerontological knowledge.

Stage 2 – Reconstruction of the essence of the theory

It should be emphasized here that the described stages of the analysis are not linear and many activities are performed simultaneously. As an example, detailed questions to be asked when reading texts could be used to direct the researcher's attention to specific aspects of a given theory. It is with their help that the proper reconstruction of knowledge can be made. More, with such questions, one selects (evaluates) what is important, less important or unimportant for the theory. The questions asked, as well as an earlier selection of the research material, determine the results of the work. Such a procedure destroys the myth that positive reconstruction is only an uncritical and non-assumptive tool for a theory of aging (Śliwerski, 2004). Although on the one hand, the researcher should be open to new theories, views or concepts to faithfully reflect the intention of the author of a given idea, to see world through the author's eyes, reconstruction, or reception of other people's views, always involves explaining the meaning of the concepts, phenomena or mechanisms. In other words, the researcher builds meaning in the process of understanding. This is a different process from what Schleiermacher presented in the field of hermeneutics. The concept of his hermeneutics referred to understanding at two levels: divinational and comparative

(Ablewicz, 1994). It is this first way that is close to the assumptions of Śliwowski's positive reconstruction which is about empathizing with the studied object.

However, there is no procedure teaching how to empathize with the subject of the research in order to understand it. As Ricoeur argues, (2006) the meaning of the text and the author's intention are two separate things. Thus, if the objective meaning of a text is something other than the author's subjective intention, then it can be constructed in various ways (Ricoeur, 2006). According to Eric Hirsch (after: Ricoeur, 2006), there is no single binding method for guessing or constructing the meaning of a text. In the opinion of this scholar, the act of understanding is initially a brilliant (or failed) guess, and there are no methods for guesswork, there are no rules for creating insights; the methodological activity of interpretation begins when we begin to test and criticize our guesses. By virtue of methodological activity which involves carrying out the so-called discrediting procedure similar to the criterion of Popper's falsification, some interpretations become more likely than others (Hirsch in: Ricoeur, 2006). Returning to the theory reconstruction procedure, one should decide which questions are particularly helpful in understanding the text. During the study, we should ask about the general outline of the theory, or what it concerns. We should stick strictly to what the perspective says. One must not go beyond the boundaries set by the analyzed theory. It is also important to pay attention to the level of analysis, in other words, determine whether the theory refers to micro, mezzo or macro phenomena. It is also important to identify the restrictions imposed by the theory on the phenomenon explained. These are the so-called determinants of theory. Moreover, one should consider the impact of time on the theory. Has the theory been refuted or enriched?

The notion of time in reconstructing theory is important. The methodology of history (Topolski, 1973) comes in useful here, which points to two separate points in time: the time of the theory's origin and reception. In the first case, we are dealing with the identification of the conditions typical for the period when the theory was created. The other case refers to many different interfering and overlapping ways of recognizing, interpreting and understanding the studied theory. Thus, the choice of time perspective leads to different cognitive results. And so, the reconstruction of the theory during its creation leads to the static cognition, while reconstructing the theory during its reception shows the dynamism of changes that have occurred throughout history. According to Sztobryn (2004), the nature of the former is subjective, while the latter is objective. It turns out that reconstruction by the method of genetic structuralism refers to both aspects of time.

The analysis of the conceptual framework is extremely important for theory reconstruction. Therefore, we should ask what main concepts constitute the theory. Concepts are the material from which the theory is built. The definitions together with the terms used in the theory make it special and verifiable. What the researcher should be interested in is the frequency of occurrence of given concepts, because there is a relationship saying that the higher the frequency of their appearance, in theory, the

greater the probability of complex relationships between the analyzed terms. Attention should also be paid to auxiliary concepts without which all argumentation is incomprehensible. The researcher should be particularly interested in how the concepts are defined because in this way their importance is emphasized. It is about their semantic boundaries and the resulting consequences. When talking about the consequences, attention should be focused on the degree of abstractness of the analyzed concepts. The more abstract they are, the bigger the class of phenomena and objects they cover, and consequently, they do not apply only to a few selected cases. Moreover, we should also check their impact on the perception of reality by individuals or a given social group. Finally, we need to examine the relationships between concepts. Sometimes the author of the theory does not point directly to the relationship between the terms that form the conceptual apparatus of a given theory, so we need to pay attention to language expressions that would indicate the existence of such relationships. They are phrases like “strengthens”, “lowers”, “causes consequences,” etc. These relationships can be grouped into positive, negative, linear and additive (Kenneth, 2005). This way of analyzing concepts is similar to one of the five basic methods of the history of philosophy, namely the doxographic method (Kuderowicz, 1978).

Another element that should be carefully looked at are the theorems of theories, which explain trends and regularities in the observed reality. On the other hand, the statements are to explain phenomena according to a uniform principle (Nowak, 2008). Some scientific laws cover the whole of what can be empirically observed, while others limit themselves to explaining small fragments of reality. The mechanisms of aging are expressed primarily in theorems. They create an essential layer of understanding of what the theory presents. The truth of the presented theorems can be proved only by arguments based on the model of deductive or inductive research. The reconstruction of the theory of aging should include the argumentation of the presented statements. Only in this way will the reader have a chance to decide about the validity of the theses cited.

When making the reconstruction, one should also pay attention to the methodology used by the author of the theory. The researcher focuses on methods and definitions. The reconstruction involves studying the previous research on the same subject as well as research works in which the results of tests or theory verification are presented.

The stages of development of a given theory can be looked at in two ways: namely from the perspective of internal changes in a particular theory or from the perspective of other theories arising in a specific space of time, designed to explain and understand the same phenomenon. There are at least two ways to transform a theory: modification and synthesis. They facilitate the development of theory. There are numerous examples of theory modifications. The basic ones include expanding or reducing the meaning of terms. In doing so, the researcher does not agree with the meaning of a given concept presented by his or her predecessors. They are required to understand the original meaning of the concept being studied. This procedure was used, among others, by Emil Durkheim. By broadening the definition of the ritual, he was able to

understand the behavior of Americans during the Independence Day celebrated on July 4th. The second way to transform theory is to synthesize or combine elements from different theories into one. For example, Georg Herbert Mead borrowed the concept of “self” from William James, the “will” from William Wundt and the “looking glass self” from Charles Cooley, creating his original concept he called symbolic interactionism (Kenneth, 2005).

Stage 3 – Origins of the analyzed theories

The third stage of reconstruction research using the genetic structuralism method refers to the sources of transformation of the theory. Referring to the theoretical inspirations of genetic structuralism, there is no doubt that the emerged broader structures, which are the source of the reconstructed theories, must be dynamic to show the course of knowledge development of aging. At the same time, the direction of this development should have the character of progressive changes. In other words, each subsequent structure must be more complex, show more relationships, and reveal a wealth of details that cannot be included in simple empirical generalizations. Only in this way can the evolutionary mechanism of knowledge creation about aging be traced. Two phenomena known in science as positivism and anti-positivist breakthrough can serve as broader structures. They concretize in the structures referred to as modernism, critical theory and postmodernism, that is, contemporary co-existing paradigms. In the specialist literature, this synchronous approach, slightly different in shape, can be found in the works of Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (2000). Regardless of the choice of (names) of structures, it should be remembered that the process of destructurization of pre-existing structures and structuring of new structures should allow us to explain and understand the genesis of the theorization of the phenomenon of aging.

Stage 4 – Reception of theories of aging

Within the literature theory, many methodological approaches are formulated, in which one could examine the reception of the theory of aging in Poland. To put it simply, we can say that the process of reception, on the one hand, involves reading the meanings that are inscribed in the message, and on the other hand is the interpretation of the message (Mrozowski, 2001). By examining the reception of a given text, both the meanings contained in the text and the meanings given to the text by the recipient are examined. There is often a discrepancy between the types of meanings recalled. However, the meaning given to the text is more important than the meaning assigned to it by the author, and so the cognitive effort should focus on the meanings that have been given to the subsequent theories of aging by gerontologists and researchers associated with this discipline.

When analyzing scientific texts, there is some ease in reading meanings, because the style of scientific work is characterized by simplicity, unambiguity, and precision,

unlike the analysis of literary works, which are in principle semantically more open (Eco, Rorty, Culler, & Brooke-Rose, 2008). However, despite the unambiguity of scientific texts and their literal nature, which does not allow for too much interpretative freedom, it is impossible to impose only one method of interpretation on the recipient (Mrozowski, 2001). Therefore, there may be discrepancies in the understanding of reconstructed theories of aging because there are many potential readings.

Reception research in its simplest form consists of collecting and ordering the statements of recipients (Polish researchers) and broadcasters, i.e. the creators of the theory of aging or other authors writing in the language of the origin of the analyzed theory. The next step is an attempt to compare these statements with one another (Wienold, 1986). The benchmark for the conducted comparisons will be the reconstructed theories of aging made by the researcher. Thus, comparative studies will de facto involve comparisons between the meanings attributed by the researcher to theories of aging and meanings given to these theories by other researchers.

Conclusion

Researchers who present their theory of aging reception usually do not reveal what methodology or methods they used. They do not indicate strengths or weaknesses resulting from the adopted interpretive practice. Moreover, there is a lack of theoretical analyzes in Poland that would critically review the achievements of social gerontology and the recent few studies in this field do not compensate for the existing shortcomings. This shortage of publications resulting from theoretical research, which aims to create theoretical and methodological foundations related to the phenomenon of old age and aging, results in the lack of a broad perspective enabling reliable assessment of the theoretical nature of social gerontology. Thus, the method of reconstruction of the theory of aging presented in the article may be an interesting proposition for conducting theoretical research in the field of social gerontology.

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